DRĀVIDA AND KERALA

IN THE ART OF TRAVANCORE

BY

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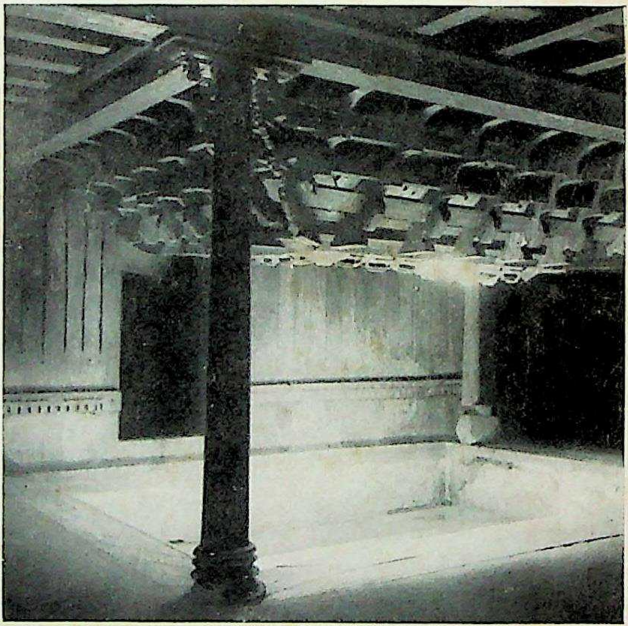

Nair house; Light and Water Shaft

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DRĀVIḌA AND KERALA IN THE ART OF TRAVANCORE

Thousands of temples are still used for worship in Malabar, on the southwest coast of India. In Travancore, the extreme south of this green strip of land between the sea and the mountains, two traditions of art coexisted. The one forms part of the Drāviḍa school of architecture; the other is indigenous. The Drāviḍa school of architecture, to the exclusion of any other style, is at home in South India, on the east or Coromandel coast; at the extreme southern point of the peninsula it touches also the West coast, in Travancore. Another indigenous school of architecture, sculpture and painting, by which the West coast of South India or Malabar is distinguished, may be designated as the Kerala school. Kerala was the ancient name of Malabar. To the northeast of this country, in the Kanarese Districts of the Deccan, are some of the most ancient temples of the Drāviḍa school. This is their northernmost extent, and there they appear by the side of Nāgara temples.*

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* The term Nāgara primarily designates the curvilinear tower of the sanctuary of the majority of temples to the north of the Kanarese Districts of the Deccan. The sanctuary is generally square in plan.

DRĀVIḌA TEMPLES ON A SQUARE PLAN

In the extreme southwest of India the Drāviḍa temples built in stone and bricks are preserved from an earlier age than the laterite, brick and timber temples of Kerala. They may have been preceded by brick and timber constructions which have perished. The Drāviḍa temples are represented in several of their varieties: (Pl. 1) as small shrines, consisting of a cell having a superstructure (the temples of Vizhinjam); stairs, sometimes a porch, led to it; (Pl. 2) as low, spreading structures or hall temples, having a pillared interior; or as high structures appearing to have several storeys, but which in fact have no interior or accessible space corresponding to the ornate and diminutive storeys of their superstructures.

These varieties of the temple with a square plan are representative of Drāviḍa architecture. The temples in Vizhinjam (Pl. 1), of the ninth century, are akin to contemporary Chola shrines in Kaleyapatti, Tiruppur and sites in Pudukkottai. There the walls are built of very large stones. In Vizhinjam, however, the base, the pilasters and pillars in the corners and the porch, as well as the entablature and roll cornice, are of stone but the walls and the superstructure are of brick masonry. Were there no filling brick walls, the shrine would be an open pavilion supported on pillars. However, the shrines are closed, conforming with the square Liṅga shrines of South India. The superstructure, a small shrine in itself, has a square dome shape, which together with its dormer windows and finial-like portion is solid. The walls of the small upper temple, or High Temple, have a buttress or a projected niche in the centre. They are overshadowed by a deep and long roll cornice (this has disappeared in the temple having a porch, and is partly broken on the smaller shrine). The heavy roll cornice, high up, has a lowering effect on the superstructure. It accentuates the breadth of the dome shape: the whole edifice is given further girth, beyond the extent of its walls, by the main roll cornice which tops the cubical sanctuary and also connects it with its porch. Below, the socle has two widely projected fillets. Their sharp, horizontal bands are interrupted in front by the rolling curves of the stair.

These buildings are set up on a very wide terrace. The intention of the architectural form is an effect of height. It is raised on a terrace, thence on a socle, and has piled on top of its walls yet another structural shape. But this height is negatived by the repeated horizontals of fillets and roll-cornices, proportionately increasing in vertical sequence in their projection from the part of the building which they encompass.

The Guhanāthasvāmi temple at Cape Comorin (985-1013 A.D.) does not represent a development of the type of temples built in Vizhinjam (Pl. 2). While the Vizhinjam temples house nothing but a small, cubic space, the Guhanāthasvāmi temple comprises a hall within its interior and in its centre (capped by a dome shape which replaces the original superstructure) is a small sanctuary. The small cubical temple with flat ceiling, if thought of without its superstructure, base and roll cornice, resembles a dolmen raised on a socle—such Shiva temples are known in South India. However the spacious interior of the Guhanāthasvāmi temple and other contemporary temples in South India has other antecedents. Structural halls used as temples, of which a few only are in existence, are described in a compendium of Indian architecture of early 11th century, the *Samarāṅganasūtradhāra*. This type of temple must have been widely represented in the Deccan and in South India.

The Guhanāthasvāmi temple is akin to hall temples in Pudukkottai, such as the Shiva temple in Mangudi, The wall of the temple (the window openings, as they are at present, appear to be of later date) is divided into a zone of pillars and a high portion above their capitals. The capitals project boldly and their thin tiers repeat on the wall the effect of the socle, although their band of shadows is lighter and non-continuous, forming an architectural rhythm which divides the wall horizontally. In comparison with the other temples the shafts of the pillars are proportionately low. The roll cornice with its carved attic windows and the lion frieze above are the common property of all Drāviḍa temples of this age. The Guhanāthasvāmi temple is built of stones; as in the other temples of this kind, they are of large size in proportion to the low wall. Its small height is made even lower in effect by the horizontal mouldings which are given particular emphasis. The Guhanāthasvāmi temple rests within their embrace, closely hugged to the ground.

The third variety of the South Indian or Drāviḍa temple is represented by the temple of Pārthivashekharapuram, a palimpsest, of which the socle goes back to the ninth century. This kind of temple has the shape of a stepped pyramid; a central, square structure forms its nucleus and is surrounded on each floor by a parapet, originally a cloister of chapels of different shapes symmetrically aligned. The walls of the central shrine are topped on each floor by eaves widely projected. On their underside they show a construction which recalls their wooden prototypes.

The Drāviḍa school of architecture classified its temples according to the shape of the "dome" of the High Temple, as Nāgara, Drāviḍa, and Vesara, these being square * (Pl. 1), octagonal, and round respectively. The cloister which originally surrounded the sacred precinct is an indispensable part of a Kerala temple. It is without "chapels" and is built of wood. This structural shape has not been translated into stone in the Drāviḍa temples of Travancore.

However, the ancient practice of architectural translation was not forgotten. The craftsmen who had cut temples in the rocks of Bihar or of the Deccan carved the shapes of the wooden architecture on the facade of their excavations, and vaulted the interior of their temples to resemble those of their wooden prototypes. The same practice of literal translation from one structural technique and substance into another was followed by the builders of Travancore when they set up the *navarātri maṇḍapa* in Suchindram, a stone structure, representative of the last phase of Drāviḍa architecture (Pl. 3). Its pillars do not support the usual flat ceiling, but a coffered one, raised above the beams by a bracket construction which has the shape of a four-sided collar ceiling. Every detail of the original wooden construction is carved in stone (Pl. 4). No attempt has been made to adjust the forms of ceiling and pillars.

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* The two fold application of the term Nāgara (cf. p. 5) is discussed on pp. 175, 292-294 of "The Hindu Temple" by Stella Kramrisch.

CIRCULAR DRĀVIḌA TEMPLES

Of greater significance and beauty than the Drāviḍa Prāsādas (temples) built on a square plan are the circular shrines. Vāstu-Shāstras, the traditional texts on the science of Indian architecture and known from about the sixth century A. D., treat in detail of the various types of circular temples built throughout India from that age to the sixteenth century, when Srī Kumāra of Kerala compiled the "Shilparatna." Very few round temples are known to exist outside Kerala, although the walls of one of the earliest structural temples yet known (at Bairat, Jaipur, Rājasthān, of the third-second century B. C.), are circular.

The temple of Niramankara is raised on a circular pavement which forms the outer path of circumambulation (Pl. 5). This elegant building is a *sāndhāra prāsāda.* In addition to the ambulatory in the open it has an inner, covered one which lies behind the circular enclosure wall. Steps lead up to it. The inner wall of this inner ambulatory is square; it is the wall of the Garbhagṛiha, the innermost sanctuary. It is surmounted by an octagonal dome.

The inner temple, the *Srīkoil*, originally was not visible as it is today.* In front of it on each side and forming a circle in the inner ambulatory, are two high pillars. As they are seen today they end with a tenon to which originally seems to have been mortised the wooded framework of a roof over the entire building. The shape of the roof would have been conical. The placement of one building within another is part of the Indian tradition of sacred architecture. When complete, the temple of Niramankara must have been similar from the outside to the circular *Srīkoil* of the thirteenth century temple in Tirunandikkara, which is covered by a conical roof. This type of *Srīkoil* is practically unchanged in buildings of the sixteenth century, such as the temple in Vaikom. (Pls. 7 and 8).

The incorporation of a Drāviḍa temple within a Kerala temple is not the only complex shape of the temple in which the builders of Malabar showed their proficiency. The circular Drāviḍa Vimāna became fused with the indigenous *Srīkoil.* The shrine of Valyandyadichapuram of the sixteenth century, is a perfect solution (Pl. 6). The secret of the mixture of the Drāviḍa and the Kerala form lies in the fact that the architectural shapes in both schools go back to similar or identical origins.

On the wall of the circular temple of Valyandyadichapuram the motives of pilasters and niches are reduced to a flat minimum (Pl. 6). The wall is almost plain; it can be imagined completely covered by mural paintings. A conical roof would fit over its simple shape, the perpendicular walls forming a cylinder. Replacing, however, the crisp angle of such a roof, a widely projected roll cornice throws its shadow over the walls and protects them. Above it as if binding the walls is a circular rim, the highest part built of stone. Extended in height by courses of bricks, it forms the socle of the brick-built superstructure. It rises with three storeys of its own. But for the apsidal chapels, the rampart corresponds to those on a Drāviḍa superstructure having a square section.

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* The Srīkoil is the structure which houses the innermost sanctuary. It corresponds to Prāsāda or Vimāna in the terminology of the Nāgara and Drāviḍa schools of architecture.

In all the temples, whether square or circular in plan, the socle is variously divided into three zones of mouldings. They clasp the building firmly, and impart to it a rooted stability. The richer shapes of the Drāviḍa socles, belonging to the various ages of the school outside Travancore, are eschewed. The reason is not that the Travancore temples are smaller, for even small and early Chola temples, like those of Kodumbalur in Pudukkottai, rise from lotus petalled and other complex, heavily rounded and obliquely projected bases. A late and otherwise ornate structure like the *gopuram* (gate tower) in Suchindram is based on a relatively plain socle consisting of three major mouldings. While angular mouldings prevail up to the fourteenth century, those of the subsequent periods incorporate various torus (*kumbha*) and cyma (*padma*-lotus) shapes. The latter, even though carved in the likeness of petals, are discretely subordinated to the general effect. This is more obvious even on the circular than on the other temples. The Drāviḍa temples of Travancore are not the only ones which rest on bases of this particular quality. Buildings constructed in the indigenous manner of Kerala are similarly supported. Whether built according to the Drāviḍa or to Kerala tradition, the smooth continuity of the mouldings of the socle is most fully one with the total structure if the building is circular. There its self-contained, capacious sweep is one in nature with the curves which also distinguish the wall paintings of Malabar.

KERALA TEMPLES

The indigenous temples are four-sided (Pl. 10) or circular; (Pls. 8, 9) the latter shape is possibly the more ancient; the *garbhagṛiha*, however, is always square. The original plan and, as a rule, the stone socle, of the indigenous temples in Travancore are complete to this day. Many a *Srīkoil* is raised above steps which are inscribed. Their lateral carvings together with the inscriptions prove them to be centuries earlier than the present shrine, which is a reconstruction identical in plan with the original building. Similarly, the entire site plan of these temples of the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries faithfully follows the prescriptions and practice of earlier centuries.

The main building lies on an East-West axis within a rectangular cloister (Pl. 7). Although the *Srīkoil* is not placed in the exact centre, it can be approached from the four directions and its high roof dominates the assemblage of buildings. Cloistered temples are not confined to Malabar.

Pallava temples in Mamallapuram and Kāñchīpuram, Jain temples in Rājasthān and other parts of India, the temples of Kashmir and those of Mysore are similarly enclosed. This plan of temple precincts is ancient and has its beginnings in the enclosure by which a sacred field was demarcated prior to the building of a temple on it. In the early centuries of the present era the Buddhists in Gandhāra worshipped in stone-built shrines within similarly planned sanctuaries. The corresponding structures in India were built of wood and bricks and have perished.

The roofs are the main accents of Kerala buildings. The Kerala idiom is seen typically in their wooden construction and in the wood carvings. Where, however, the walls are of plastered stone or brick, it is in their paintings. These differ widely from those in Ajanta, except that they cover the entire available wall space. This is also true of the carvings, of the timber architecture where all their inordinate wealth is comprised within or covered by large and pure architectural shapes: The broad cone of the roof of the *Srīkoil*, the oblong frame of the pent roofs of the surrounding halls hold under their wide eaves a wealth of figure and colour, which, if exposed or removed from these lids and receptacles, would have a forlorn splendour and involved intricacy.

The roofs as a rule are covered with thin tiles. The carefully planned construction and form of the roofs was proportionate in all its parts. For example, the length and thickness of the various kinds of rafters and their parts, were calculated as forming the hypotenuse of the respective rectangular triangle of posts and brackets, etc. The proportionate thickness of the hip-rafters of a ridged roof over a rectangular building, for example, is equal to the diagonal of the square section of the rafters, which are bolted to the sides of the top beam (according to "Vāstuvidyā", chapter X).*

The various joints have each a proper name and employment; the science of wooden construction assured the greatest precision, stability and durability to the building. A simple and ingenious construction shows the framework of the roof planted in the ground and not resting on the walls of the building, so that at the same time the roof has a firm support and the interior of the temple is replete with spaced rhythm of concentric, pillared colonnades.

Single or double roofs alike give an effect of lightness to the otherwise low structure. The portion of the building covered by the sloped roofs is more than four times the height of the visible perpendicular wall of the temple (Pl. 9). Outside Malabar not even the highest superstructure of any temple of India ever rose to such proportionate heights. Outside Malabar, the superstructure of stone or brick temples is as a rule not more than double the height of the walls and does not exceed thrice their height. The wall of the Kerala temples is very low in proportion to the girth of the temple, and the total height does not exceed much if at all the height of the enclosing trees and palms.

The circular *Srīkoil* is clear-cut, but its simple shape is embellished by sumptuous detail. The balance of these two conceptions is rigorously drawn. The architectural shape as a whole remains unaffected by the frenzy of devotional imagery which is carved on its brackets, struts and uprights on the outside, and on the ceilings inside the building. The paintings similarly cover every wall space, like a tapestry in which the building appears clothed. This conception of the "painted temple" (Pl. 9) exists today only on the Malabar Coast. It must have been a widely used type of sacred architecture in India, not only in the interior of the Buddhist cave-temples but also in the whole South of India. Certain Drāviḍa temples are classified as *ābhāsa* in Vāstu-Shāstra. The name *ābhāsa* may be derived from the glowing radiance of the paintings which covered them. But paintings or carvings, however exuberant in detail, are subordinated to the architectural shape of which they are an integument. They do not dissolve it, however flamboyant their details.

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* The correspondences or seaborne interrelation of the methods of wooden construction in Chinese and Kerala architecture await detailed study.

The planning of the site and the spacing of elemental architectural shapes within the enclosure of the temple reflect the order of the cosmos in whose likeness the temple is conceived. The temple is engulfed by untrammelled, luxurious nature, and has absorbed it, integrated it within the simplicity of its order, in the innumerable carvings and paintings.

The reduplication of the roof, i. e., the addition of a second storey of the superstructure, not only adds height but also provides further opportunity of embracing an even wider range of images (Pl. 14). This is not a secondary consideration with the builders of these temples. The work of building a temple gives liberation *(mokṣha)* to the builder or patron (Vishvakarmaprakāsha, VI. 10). Even a person who merely comes to see the temple is by the sight of it freed from all sins and becomes pure (Vishṇudharmottara, III. LXXXVII. 63). Seeing the temple with the look of Knowledge is one way of achieving reintegration. It is thus necessary to show meticulously all that is to be seen.

Attention has frequently been drawn to the similarity of certain Nepalese structures and the buildings of Kerala.* In both countries the perennial Indian tradition is living; both are rich in wood and use it. The reduplication of roofs becomes a quality of the sacred building and a means of display.

Temples having a square plan and a double or triple sloped roof exist in stone-form in Kashmir from the eighth century, but also in Gop, Kathiawar, of the Gupta age.** Vāstu-Shāstra classifies these temples and names them after mountain peaks, Himavān and Malyavān, or simply Shringavān if there is but one peaked roof (V. Dh. III, LXXXVI). When Kerala temples are built on a square or rectangular plan, their roof is constructed on similar principles. One of its shapes is the foursided pyramidal roof, which is more severe and less impressive than the conical roof with its wide, all-embracing curve (Pl. 10).

The other is a ridged roof, single or double. It has a particular shape in Kerala, common to both sacred and domestic architecture. It has a hipped end on each of its two sides; the ridge of the roof, running breadthwise, is extended beyond the hipped end and carries with it the uppermost part of the roof, which thus forms a widely projected gable above the hipped end (Pl. 11). In this "open" attic manifold carvings are introduced on the buildings belonging to the temple (Pl. 13), whereas in domestic architecture the verge of the gable overhangs less and serves the purpose of protecting a latticed roof light from an excess of rain, wind, and sun (Pl. 16).

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* The multiple pent roof towers of temples in the Kulu valley (W. Himalaya) also belong to this family.

** Cf. the brick towers at Mudabidri.

The ridge of the roof, as in the Nair house, if made of light wood, has a tendency to sag and produce a slightly concave sky-line (Pl. 16). This slightly concave outline is retained in the curve of the eaves of temple roofs whose construction is more solid. If the concave curve, however slight, was introduced to redeem the effect of angular rigidity, the convex curve,—such as might have resulted in this kind of roof construction, as it does, for example, in the rural houses and temples of Bengal,—found relatively little favour in Kerala.

The buildings of ancient India represented in reliefs and paintings belonging to the centuries before and after the beginning of this present era, in Central India, the Deccan and South India, have ridged roofs. Most are curvilinear, and even where the roof is peaked it approaches the shape of a dome in sections. The gables or windows of these buildings are also curvilinear, arched in the vertical section. In South Indian Vāstu-shāstra they are known as Nāsā ("nose"), and a very large projection in front of the superstructure of a North-Indian temple has the name Shukanāsā or Shukānghri. The first part of these composite words refers to the parrot, whose beak is curved. Aṅghri, however, denotes a pillar, and while pillars are carved in the Shukanāsā of ancient stone temples, the pillars of the Kerala gables appear to answer this term more closely. (Pl. 13, 14). On the other hand, certain motives of coëval Drāviḍa architecture are employed discretely and altogether subservient to the indigenous form.

Notwithstanding such incorporations, two forms of architecture exist simultaneously in Travancore. They serve the same Gods and forms of worship, but do not represent equal stages of architectural form such as had been represented by the coexistence of North and South Indian styles in Aihole, Mahākūṭeshvar, Pattadakal, and also in Alampur, in the Deccan. The Kerala type of building in Travancore is homely and almost dateless; the Drāviḍa buildings are more stately and are subject to all the changes of style which the development of a school of architecture implies.

Thus two well defined types of form co-exist; the one unaging, the other full of possibilities which mature in the course of centuries, and finally disintegrate. That two such forms of art may be used by the same people at the same time has been seen elsewhere in the history of Indian art. The terracottas from the days of Mohenjo Daro to the present are an example. In the history of Indian architecture, however, Travancore occupies an almost unique position over roughly a millennium. A similar co-existence of diverse architectural types might have prevailed in Bengal in the Pāla and Sena periods. The village huts of Bengal today represent the ageless type of this country.

In some of the later temples, built in the manner of Kerala, the *Srīkoil* is not a detached structure but is combined with a hall or room in front of it (Pl. 13). The total building is less pure in form, more rich in movement and more closely allied to contemporary palace or domestic architecture. But the paintings and carvings in the deep shadows beneath the eaves, and the bells suspended all around the structure, cast over it an enchantment to which no human dwelling would aspire. Carved barge-boards, drop ornaments, pinnacles and finials show this type of wooden architecture allied not only to that of Nepal and the Far East, but also to wooden churches in Norway, Russia and the Balkans, which are members of the same family.

The temples as well as the attached structures, such as the halls for theatrical performances (Pl. 11), show the most varied and complex roof constructions in their interior. In the dance-drama hall of Haripad the heavy span roof is underpinned by solid pillars on which rest strong beams. The weight of the roof is thus taken off the wooden lattice, which forms the walls and admits air and light (Pl. 12). The refinements in timber roof-framing equal those of Chinese and Gothic buildings, though they are different in purpose and shape.

KERALA HOUSES AND PALACES

The Nalukettu and Ettukettu Nair houses, having four or eight roofs and a corresponding number of wings, sets of apartments or rooms, appear to have been built in conformity with Vāstu-Shāstra from the days of the Vishvakarmaprakāsha and the Bṛihat Saṃhitā. While the temples are built of wood, brick, and stone, the houses in Malabar were built originally of mud, light woods and thatch. In Travancore the temple, the palace and the house represent degrees in the drawing on resources of structural knowledge and symbolical reference. All the resources are activated in building temples; many are left untapped in the building of palaces. The reticence is even greater in the construction of dwelling-houses, for what belongs to the Gods is not meet for man, be he even the King. Certain subjects such as scenes of war, death or sorrow in the stories of the Gods and the Asuras should not be represented in houses (Mayamata, XVIII). Certain degrees of realisation and their contents, such as the supernatural, should also be excluded (Vishṇudharmottara, Part III, Ch. XLIII).

The range of subjects and of wealth of carving is restricted in the palaces and the homes of later centuries, and a sage economy of motives is practised by the builders. Most of the wood work in the houses built from the eighteenth century is purely structural. However, a few symbolical shapes are introduced, such as the *vyāla* (mythical animal) which supports the built-in seat and shows it to be a *siṃhāsana* (lion-seat) (Pl. 17), and the lotuses in the caissons of the ceiling or at the juncture of joists or beams (Pl. 17). The rest of the wood-work, the curves and crockets of braces, the rod or cable-shaped battens, add the weight of their form to an interior mellow with the play of light and shade on coffered ceiling and curved edge of the collar-like roof, and to the inside of the eaves. The main accents, however, are those of the structural disposition of pillar and beam, door and overdoor, of vertical and horizontal; and the main contrasts are between the flat surface of the boarded wall and the volumes of shade and shaped wooden form. The entrance hall of a building of this type is sumptuous, yet airy and sober. Its ceiling appears almost bare if compared with that of a temple *maṇḍapa* (Pl. 15). There the architecture is but the ground on which thrives a wealth of carvings; each composition, each image follows the architectural discipline in its spacing, and has its definite place in a hierarchy of symbols, each in its proper position: the Nine Planets (*navagraha*) or the guardians of the eight regions around Brahmā in the coffers of the ceiling; Rāmāyaṇa scenes in panels or in the shape of brackets or as enrichments of mouldings; and further down, the ends of the roof terminate in Nāga shapes. The latter can also be seen on stone ceilings of the temples of Central India, in the tenth century and later. Painted Navagraha ceilings are the rule in *maṇḍapas* of Hindu temples in South India and of Buddhist temples in Ceylon, at the same time when these images are carved in wood in the *maṇḍapas* of temples in Travancore. No parallel can be quoted of the Rāmāyaṇa scenes as brackets and mouldings below the ceiling, although they are carved as friezes and panels in the stone temples of South India (Punjai, Tanjore District, etc.).

These themes are set off in the temples against an array of carved symbols which form their background. Such luxuriance is more than the eye can discern at a glance. The knowledge which the devotee has of these several shapes and their meaning simplifies the task of the eye, but this knowledge by itself would not suffice to give to each carving its due effect in the whole. The effect is achieved by the fact that the eye of the devotee is at a distance from the carving, furthermore by the darkness in the recesses; thus, shapes of a more particular significance gradually emerge in front of and against a background of symbols of general validity. These are seen but dimly or in places only where the light of day or of oil lamps throw into relief one or the other carving of the background.

Such knowledge and recognition have their place in the temple; they would be out of place in the daily use of the house where everything serves an immediate purpose in straightforward shapes. How varied these are depends not only on the size of the house and the wealth of the patron but even more on the various usages which they serve. The skylight, for example, in the central hall of a Nalukettu (four wing house), has the shape of a shaft and is sunk into the hall from the ceiling, for not only light but rain as well is conducted into the hall, and the water is collected in a spacious sunk basin below the rectangular opening in the ceiling (Pl. 18). Basin and floor are built and paved with stone slabs. This "water and light" room is set in a wholly ingenious way. Many more of these purely Kerala shapes and effects of interior architecture solve practical problems imposed by a special climate, light, and mode of life.

In the palaces, the same ingenuity within a tradition of long standing is present in greater display. The railing-louver wall admits diffused and tempered light and air into the hall (Pl. 19). The upper part having the louver effect is curved outward; sinuous and strong studs, through which pass the planks of the louver link the eaves of the roof to the railing wall below. The wall so formed is built up in an airy pattern full of light. Its larger and upper part is not perpendicular but swings outward towards the frame of the ceiling, which rests on solid pillars; they are the only verticals in the hall. The whole interior but for the pillars is like a wide basket, shady, cool, and full of the movement of light and air. The pillars, with their floreated brackets and pendants, appear not wholly congruous if seen by themselves instead of immersed in the particular space of the hall (Pl. 19).

Western European influence had come to be a weakening factor in buildings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although present on the Malabar coast from the sixteenth century onward, there was no scope for its entry or assimilation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is the more noteworthy, as Westernisms were largely accepted in the paintings of the Mughals at that time. The paintings of Malabar, however, remained free from Western influence, even those executed in the Mattancheri Palace, which the Portuguese presented to the Raja of Cochin about 1555 A.D. Only in the second set of murals, painted after the Dutch restoration of the palace within the eighteenth century, did Western influence immobilize the power of these compositions.

Kerala architecture comprises temples and humble dwelling houses, which latter until at least the middle of the 16th century were built of mud. The local convention required that houses of wood and stone be built only for Kings and Gods. Everyone else had to live in mud houses (i. e. temporary structures).

The Nair houses in their own detailed interior decoration are thus adaptations of the palace. Their plan whether in four or eight wings, must have been customary also when impermanent materials were used for those buildings. The plan of the house was not transferred to the temple, which, being the house of God, fulfilled a function different from that of the houses of man.

The original distinction between these two abodes is made by primitive people such as the Chenchus, for example, who live in caves, but build a round bamboo hut for their Gods.

The circular *Srīkoil*, the shape most particular to Kerala, has no prototype in the houses of Brahmins and Nayars. Circular buildings however are set up by some of its primitive peoples. The Ullatas ensconce the bride-to-be in a large round building made of leaves, where she chooses her husband. These religious and ritual buildings are themselves partly of a temporary nature, set up for a definite occasion and soon destroyed; but the practice is living and not forgotten. Such structures as well as the circular and conical huts of the Malapantarams are among the shapes contributing to the circular *Srīkoil* and its conical roof.

These circular buildings, as well as the shed generally used as places of worship, are connected in shape and purpose with the Kerala temples. The Kerala temples in Travancore did not derive from the megalithic practice of setting up dolmens — though this practice is extensively represented in Travancore and contributed to the shape and structure of the Hindu temple elsewhere in India. The flatroofed Gupta temples in Central India, and, to a certain extent, the Drāviḍa temples generally of the earlier period, show, integrated into their own shapes and technique, those of the megalithic structures. But this component was not contributed particularly to the Drāviḍa temples in Travancore. Wherever the ethnical roots lie of the elements that contributed to the Kerala temples, the consistency of their simple shapes is part of the scene of the country.

THE STONE SCULPTURES IN TRAVANCORE

The stone sculptures in Travancore although few in number are representative of South Indian sculpture from the eighth to the sixteenth century. The rock-cut figure of a donor or chieftain, in Kaviyur (Pl. 20) is closely related to Pallava *dvārapālas* and other figures of the Drāviḍa country. Its pose in particular has its equal in the figure of a Pallava chieftain in the rock cut Shiva Temple of Kunnandarkoyil in Pudukkottai. In its sculptural style and general type of costume there is nothing to distinguish this carving from any figure of the east coast, except that the accoutrements are simpler and adhere more to the body of the figure with its surging stance and commanding restraint. The composition of cylindrical volumes, heavier towards the top, is held up by the verticals of the legs whose straightness is emphasized by the ends of the waistband; these cling symmetrically to either leg and as far down as the short loin cloth.

Another figure of a bearded Rishi in the same cave has none of the sculptural quality of the Chieftain's shape; its animation is more descriptive. The naturalism of this figure is familiar to Pallava art; it is assigned its place in a relief like that of "Kirātārjunīya" in Mamallapuram, where the emaciated shapes of the hero and Rishis are part of this relief's array of types. The many possibilities within Pallava sculpture are represented also outside the central school. A hitherto unidentifiable relief, for example, to either side of the entrance of a cave temple of Vizhinjam, though unfinished, has much in common with later Pallava work (Pl. 21).

These Hindu sculptures carved in the rock are followed in the ninth century by a group of Jain reliefs cut in the Chitaral Hill (Pl. 22), and by images of the Buddha, from Mavelikara. They are carved in the round with a breadth which relieves their dogmatic tedium (Pl. 23). The images of Padmāvatī Devī, moreover, of which Pl. 22 shows but little, have all the ripeness of modelling and leisure of stance of images of the Goddess carved throughout India in the ninth century.

It can be seen on the Guhanāthasvāmi temple (ca. 11th century) that the facility in carving traditional symbols made the quality of their form frequently sink below their meaning. These carvings were the work of competent, though uninspired, craftsmen; they helped towards a reading of the context of the symbols without appealing to the total sensibility of the devotee.

Far from marking a falling off in the course of centuries from the attainment of the Pallava type of sculptures, fluctuations in the quality of the reliefs may best be judged where allied subjects decorate the same part of the temple, as in Figs. 24 and 25, a dancer, male in the one carving, female in the later, between two musicians. The first carving, on the lateral panel of the stair of the Kidangur temple precedes by about a century the finical Trivikramamangala relief. It has rhythm in the powerful action of the *kuda-kuttu* (*kuda*-pot, *kuttu*-dance). Even so, the carving is none too well spaced in relation to the panel, and the pots so deftly juggled by the dancer have not been utilised by the sculptor for a balanced distribution of the figures on the ground. Its upper part is blank.*

When, however, a great task was entrusted to a sculptor equal to it, an image of the dignity of the Vishṇu of Niramankara is the result (Pl. 26). In this image of the fourteenth century the spirit of Kerala has found a complete form through the medium of Drāviḍa conventions. The body and limbs of this image are broad and weighty, but without heaviness. The sculpture is magnificent in its proportions. The high pillar of the crown attracts wheel and conch, symbols hovering above the hands of the God, and surrounding the majesty of his face. This "halo", in which the outer arms partake, swings around the upper part of the image and is traversed by the counter-movement of the lower arms which lead back to the total pillar of the God's upright stance, clad in scarves and ornaments. There the ascension of the halo is prepared in narrower, inverted arches. They span the God's powerful form; ripples of radiance in the shape of folds of raiment cling to his legs.

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* not shown in Pl. 24.

Few of the innumerable images of Vishṇu have succeeded in showing him as the pillar and support of the cosmos whose radiance is that of the sun. The sculptor of the image of Niramankara has made the icon planear and yet, what volume of inhaled breath is hid in the chest and dilates the shoulders and imparts supreme power to the face! The gaze of the eyes is charged with power, and the broad mouth tastes its radiance.

It appears as if the Kerala artist contributed not only the form but also the physiognomy of this image. Power in the glance of the eyes and squareness of face are peculiar also to the Chieftain's figure and might be specific traits of the physiognomy of stone sculptures as shaped by Kerala craftsmen of the Drāviḍa school in Travancore.

The 16th century temple town of Suchindram is accomplished in architectural form, Drāviḍian in style and Kerala by the application. It contains amongst its many sculptures some of a nobility and livingness of form which, two centuries earlier, distinguished the Vishṇu of Niramankara and at a distance of eight centuries at least, made the Chieftain in Kaviyur the gate-keeper of the future of Travancore sculpture.

In the large relief of Vishṇu Trivikrama, the architectural frame, i. e. the flanking pilasters, though not specially devised for framing this particular composition, yet accompany the stages and keep pace in their sections with the drama enacted by the figures of the relief (Pl. 27).

The Trivikrama composition has many famous predecessors such as the gigantic reliefs in Badami and Mamallapuram about a millenium earlier. There are others of mediaeval date, in Osiā, Rājasthān, for example but none of the later reliefs is comparable in scale and vision to the Suchindram relief.

The power of the God's step, the magnificent distortion of the leg darting upward and accompanied by the dancing gesture of the arm is as daring as the estrangement from the body of the God of the three arms and their weapons on the right side of the relief. In their rotating movement the arms seem to burst forth from behind the leg, an aggrandised continuation on the horizontal axis of the arms on the other side. This other side of the image does not take part in the cataclysmic upheaval; there the God is nothing but beautiful and young—his club and arm provide the support of his stride. The feat of the great God is rounded off at the bottom of the relief. There the rueful Bali squats at the left while on the right this King of the Asuras and Viṣhṇu in his dwarf shape confirm their contract by the rite of pouring water over the hands of the baby-shaped God. Clouds accompany His great stride and serenely subside in ordered rows when the celestials emerge and render homage to Him. The heavenly counterplay to the great commotion which reaches to the sphere of the gods is devotional. Their movements embody the music of the spheres, which pervades the pattern of the clouds.

While so surpassing a vision and its adequate form are not common among the carvings of Suchindram, nor in any other temple, the average quality of sculpture in the sixteenth century is high (Pl. 28). Uninjured by iconoclasm and unaffected by foreign form, stone sculpture in Travancore — and not only in the South of the State — maintained a high level of which Drāviḍa art was the substratum and the illumination of the Kerala craftsman its actuality.

THE METAL IMAGES

The substratum also remains Drāviḍian in some of the few metal images dating from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries. While certain local peculiarities are to be seen on each of the earlier images, these do not suffice to give them particular distinction. The eighth to ninth century image of Vishṇu Varadarāja — its attributes and hands similar to those of the Niramankara image — follows the Pallava school in its own humble way (Pl. 29 a. b.). Certain local idioms are to be noted. The right hand of this and other Travancore images of this type is not shown with its fingers pointing down; a round object rests on its palm and the fingers are bent towards it. Similar, both in the earlier metal figures and the later stone images, is also the *upavīta*, the sacred thread, in its wide lateral curve, drawn towards the right arm of the stone image and passing over it on the metal images.

Metal images, especially on a small scale, travel easily. The bronze images, supreme achievement of the Drāviḍa school of the Tamil country, dominated the output in metal images in South India. The other Southern schools rarely attained to its refinement. Nevertheless the bronze *dvārapāla* (door-keeper) figures in Trichur in Cochin are of equally high quality and are of Kerala form.

The rafter shoes rescued by chance from dissolution, and now in the Travancore Museum, show one of the many uses to which metal-work had been put in wooden architecture (Pl. 30 a, b). Some of the shapes in stone architecture, such as occur on the Buddhist railing in Barhut of the second century B. C., might originally have been of metal, affixed to the wooden construction, and subsequently translated, together with it, into stone architecture. The many medallions having lotuses or various figures as subjects, may have been metal discs on the wooden original. The rafter shoes, far from being homogeneous in the combination of their various motifs, show three distinct types assembled and overlapping. The lotus discs are cast in one with the rest of the rafter shoe. This is true also of the second element, the images of the Gods, current types of Shiva-Naṭarāja, etc., which together with their pedestals serve as adornment and also secure a firmer hold of the rafter shoe. The third element, the band of scrolls, the one a series of curls, the other a continuous arabesque of flowery plumage, are at home particularly in Malabar, where the former pattern can be seen in stone carvings and the latter in paintings.

A medley of forms and shapes like that of the rafter shoes has a certain strangeness; it should, however, be imagined in its proper position against its nearer background, the solid wooden rafter which was a unifying base of the disparate elements, whereas its wider setting amongst the carvings and paintings of the temple made it sink into the rich texture of form and colour of the total edifice.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries certain metal images, particularly those representing Shāsta, are powerful sculpture of Kerala inspiration such as it is seen in the paintings or in wood carvings. The Shāsta image of the nineteenth century (beaten silver on wood) (Pl. 31 a. b.) though hardened in its details, has a volume which exceeds its tangible shape. This volume includes the space held by the Yogapaṭṭa (band) to body and limb, the space which drops from the ornament at the back of the head to the pedestal, and also the wider space over which Shāsta rules by a movement of his hand. This Kerala lineage of sculpture has its distant ancestors in the sculptures of Mysore, known at the time of the Hoysala dynasty.

THE WOOD CARVINGS

Travancore is famous for its wealth of wood carvings, prodigious in quantity and refreshing in their variety. None exist which antedate the thirteenth century. In the profusion of carvings extending over six or seven hundred years are the residues of the innumerable images and reliefs which preceded them.

The carvings may be viewed under three heads 1) as images, 2) as narrative scenes and 3) as symbolical decoration. Under all the three heads the carvings are symbolical, each figure, scene or motif having reference to a reality which it adumbrates. These three groups, moreover, are not sharply demarcated, for the images take part in the narrative scenes, and images as well as scenes are both surrounded and altogether pervaded by symbolic adornments.

The images are carved according to rules which were binding for their execution whether in stone, wood or metal. The numberless images carved as part of a ceiling, on walls, or pillars, also conformed with the rules. The ceiling of the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* (prostration hall) in Katinamkulam shows in solemn if somewhat mechanical repetition the figures around Brahmā, the Dikpālas, the guardians of the eight directions. This theme adorned the ceilings as frequently as the Navagrahas (Pl. 32).

Where, however, the task of the craftsman was not as strictly set by the exigencies of architecture and iconography and he could fill panels and enrich mouldings by narrative scenes, he drew from the vast repertory of the Epics, mainly the Rāmāyaṇa. He composed panels and friezes with an ease only obtainable in a traditional art where the subject is known to all, the training continuous, and no effort lost on choosing a theme or the means by which it acquires form.

The Rāmāyaṇa scenes, in their many and different representations from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, show the art of the people of Malabar as it moved their heart and imagination. These carvings are the peoples' Rāmāyaṇa. It is told on their own level. The many different styles of this "folk art" do not, as a rule, depend on the way in which the cult images have to be made so as to be fit for worship. As many as are the degrees of devotion and skill, so many are the versions of the Rāmāyaṇa in the wood carvings of the temples. Their scale is modest, but each is lively and authentic. In no other branch of their visual art have the people of Malabar been given equal scope to speak in many tongues and from their hearts.

The fourteenth century representation in Sathankulangara of the vicissitudes of Sītā is sturdy and straightforward (Pl. 33). Afflicted she sits in the cloak and canopy of her long hair and her enormous hands demonstrate her abandon and grief. Hanuman is in the tree and Hanuman approaches her; the tree which links the figures fills the composition with algae-like leaves, such as grow in fairy-land; every child must delight in this setting. It is clear as a wood-cut. When the exacting task of composing the figures as an enrichment of a round moulding is carried out, the burly fairy-tale mood does not forsake the figures and the pathos of their action (Pl. 34). Although this art is truly popular it must not be imagined that it was practised outside the temples. It was a purely religious art that spoke to the people who came to the temple for the purpose of seeing it with devotion. In their own homes there was no occasion for it.

The Rāmāyaṇa scenes as carved in Sathankulangara (Pl.34) show the single figures as compact volumes spaced soberly according to size and shape of the panel they had to fill or adhering to the curved plane of the moulding on which they were carved. The groups succeed one another, or the single panels are superimposed vertically and thus fill their apportioned wall-space.

In Ettumanur, the Rāmāyaṇa scenes, though superimposed, are not confined each in its panel but are divided one from another by a representational device only, a roof, for example, or by the foliage of a tree, showing thereby that the scene takes place in the palace, or in the jungle. The several groups of figures may be superimposed without any other demarcation than that produced by their composition (the group at the bottom of the panel) (Pl. 36). Thus the scenes follow one another in the vertical, on one panel, and form in each case one consistent relief composition. The figures are placed at any angle to the ground of the relief. Their movements cut into depth or project from it as they act their parts with a vehemence that also tosses the foliage of the trees and separates the figures by deep grooves. With all their splendid acting, the movement is in their miens and gestures, not in their modelling, dissolved as their bodies are by the rings and chains of their jewellery.

High-strung, crude in their refinement and nearing a dissolution of carved form, the Ettumanur carvings are a climax of popular art in which the single elements are blended as are the ingredients in a witch's brew. Spells and sorcery are modes of belief as popular in their practice as is the appeal of these carvings. Other Rāmāyaṇa scenes in Ettumanur go even further in giving form to the uncanny; herds of demoniac beasts accompany those horizontal panels. In a context like this, the symbols and adornments (Pl. 35) too, are gnarled with demoniac traits. These override their original significance. In the seventeenth-eighteenth century the demoniac traits are combined with dissonantly inflated shapes (Pl. 37). A frantic horror vacui fastens them within intricately carved details. In the eighteenth century a brittle classicism finds a narrow way out of the barbaric medley (Pl. 38).

Another base for the display of flamboyance are the symbolic shapes of architecture. Two motives have specially been singled out from the repertory of Indian architectural form, the *gavākṣha* and another shape, which may be called *shīrṣha*.

Gavākṣha is the name of the curvilinear window-opening carved in the rock which admits light and air into the Buddhist temples. In structural Hindu temples its likeness is carved large and small, singly or connectedly, in rows and lattices over the surface of the temple. There it has no opening but is solid, a paradoxical device, a window shape through which no light can enter from without. The meaning of *gavākṣha* is "ray-eye" or ray-curve. On the temple the "ray-eye" shines with the Light from within; it is not meant to admit light into the "superluminous darkness" of the shrine where God is housed, source of all light and illumination. In this its paradoxical application, the 'ray-eye', the *gavākṣha*, is carved in any position (Pl. 36) or in rows: (Pl. 35) this pattern had been known as *gavākṣhamālā* (Raghuvamsha) for about a millennium before having been given one of its specific shapes in Kerala, where it looks like a diminutive, flamboyant frame.

From this closed window the faces of celestials look down, in Ajanta and elsewhere. It may be filled, in its large versions, with an image of the deity enshrined in the temple or with accompanying images as on temples of Central India, from the sixth century. If its size is small, other devices may fill it, floral or nameless seals of the carver's art. Thus it figures on fillets and mouldings, or it is attached to the other architectural symbol, which may be called *shīrṣha* and is carved, superimposed as a vertical device, and frames the figured panels (Pl. 36).

Shīrṣha means head, and is used to designate the bracket-shaped capital above the capital proper *(bharaṇa)* of a pillar ("Samarāṅganasūtradhāra", LVII, 128). In the rock-cut examples of the early centuries of the present era (no structural temples having survived) this sur-capital has the shape of superimposed slabs increasingly widened in area towards the top (for example in Bedsa, Karli, etc.). In these early rock-cut examples, animal figures are carved above the uppermost slab. The slabs are thus superimposed not only on top of pillars but also on top of a sacred monument, the Buddhist *stūpa*. They are supported by a cube called *harmikā*, a square enclosure, in which inheres the uppermost part of the shaft of the central pillar where it emerges from the apex of the *stūpa*'s hemisphere.

This very shape is carved in relief in Malabar; it has several more or less complex versions which allow a reconstruction of its underlying design. Carved singly and fulfilling the function of an upright which divides the scenes in the sequence, on a recessed portion of the wall (Pl. 35), it resembles in shape the *harmikā* or "house of the gods", the small house of the Buddhist *stūpa* covered by widening slabs. In this particular relief, an ornate *harmikā* is placed on a pedestal overgrown by prickly flamboyance, and the *shīrṣha* is covered by lotus petals. Elsewhere it has lateral (Pl. 36) projections such as are familiar from mediaeval pillars with their bracket capitals. These support an architectural fantasy in which the central position is held by the *gavākṣha*. The *shīrṣha* is further augmented by smaller and part replicas of the *gavākṣha* and by flamboyant scrolls. This superstructure occupies the place of the animal figures in the early rock-cut examples, on the *shīrṣha* of pillars.

A square railing is seen in lieu of the solid cubical *harmikā* on a number of *stūpas*. It surrounds a small shrine which encloses the place where the central pillar emerges.

Complete shrine-models (Kūṭa) of this type, equipped with pillars and surmounted by a large *gavākṣha*, are carved between the two tiers of the roof of the temple in Kazhakuttam (Pl. 14) (1471 A. D.).

The 'High Temple' (Kūṭa) as seat of divinity and the corresponding shape as sur-capital; and the *gavākṣha*, the place whence its Light shines forth, are thus combined with, surge from, and are surrounded by flaming shapes. This burning fantasy centred in symbols of divinity belonged to the stock in trade of the Kerala wood carver in the 16th—18th centuries.

THE PAINTINGS

Many of the wood carvings are coloured and thus become part of the painted wall. An eighteenth century temple in Pazhur shows a similar connectedness of painted wall surface and painted sculptures as could be seen in the cave temples of Ajanta or Badami in the Deccan in the sixth century.

The Devatā painted about the year 800 on the wall of the *maṇḍapa* of the Shiva cave-temple in Tirunandikkara in South Travancore, is one of the few still discernible figures (Pl. 39). This figure formed part of a large panel of which only the uppermost portion is in existence. It shows amongst flowers, clouds and rocks, traces of hands in fleeting movements and of heads bent with tenderness. In another panel are two seated figures of which one, a woman, has an impressive countenance; fragments of pillars and smiles, and elephant and leonine faces are preserved. They are shaped with the spontaneity of an established tradition which, having explored all its possibilities, shows its mastery even when it no longer draws on all of its resources.

The ground of the paintings is white, the colour of the wall, and red and touches of green and yellow are still visible. The outlines are of unequal function, either supple and modelling or else merely circumscribing the modelled surface so that it appears like a plaque set against the background. Such unevenness in the use of the elements of form is also to be seen in other paintings of approximately the same phase, such as those in the Kailāsanātha Temple in Kāñcīpuram near Madras, and in Elurā. There however, a new orientation was about to be given to wall-painting which up to then had been homogeneous in its form, and had produced over one millennium the 'classical' paintings in Bagh, Ajanta, Badami, etc., in the Deccan and in Orissa (Yogimara cave, second century B. C., Sitabhinji, 4th century A. D.).

KERALA FORM

Nothing is known as yet of painting in Travancore between Tirunandikkara and the sixteenth century. With the stupendous wall-painting of Naṭarāja in the *gopuram* of the temple of Ettumanur (Pl. 40), the chapter of Kerala painting in Travancore, to our present knowledge, opens about the same time as it does in Cochin with the wall-paintings of the Mattancheri Palace. The paintings glow in sombre colours, Indian red and terreverte, white, black and yellow; blue is very sparingly used. The technique is tempera, the binding medium being made from the seed of *abrus precatorius*. The ground of the paintings is a specially prepared plaster to which may have been added thin washes of lime. The ground supplies the white in the paintings and white details in the coloured parts are produced by scraping the surface. These white surfaces and also the deep black ones—the cascades of beards of the Rishis—help fix to the surface the round effect of the bodies and limbs of the figures. These are modelled in colour, yellow being stippled with red, and green shaded with black. A black outline binds the rotundity of the limbs.

The limbs and bodies are uniformly modelled. Smooth shapes are inflated to the same degree of roundness in all the figures, the shadows being massed towards the outlines.

These are firm, with little modelling capacity of their own so that they impart hardness to the volumes which they bound. Shading independent of any source of light metes out one and the same modelling to all the figures. There is essentially but one type for the Gods, another for the Goddesses, although the demons are cast in a greater variety of moulds. There is sameness also of position. A broad three-quarter view impresses an unmovable, permanent mood on the face. This is relieved and varied by the glances of the eyes and the gestures of the hands and arms which function as intelligible signs, each in its proper place.

The body of each figure is a compact unit, but is augmented in width beyond its amplitude by arms, generally bent at the elbows and held away from the body. Be they lowered or raised or in any other attitude, in any of the images, they form part of their coloured volume. This is further extended when the arms are many and are part of Shiva's dance.

The figures of the celestial host are shuffled in vaguely parallel horizontal rows, one above another, covering as much of one another as yet allows each figure to be identified. This refers to their connectedness vertically, whereas in the horizontal one figure borders on the other without interspace. There is no background whatsoever to their density.

Each figure is set in a circumambient line. Where this does not coincide with the outline of the body it is made particularly distinct by having a beaded border (Pl. 41) the 'beads' being specks of light, the ends of the rays emanating from these painted presences. Brahmā (not shown in Pl. 40) has a veil of locks, etc., spread around him which is hemmed by the luminous beaded border.

The sixteenth to seventeenth centuries show a sumptuous, heavy fabric of Kerala painting. Nearest to Ettumanur are the less ambitious though not less gravid paintings of the temple in Vaikom (Pl. 41).

The breadth (one would almost be tempted to say the girth) of the image of Pārvatī holding her son Gaṇapati on her lap, exceeds any dimension in which human limbs are wont to move. It has no scenery or stage, no setting comparable to any actuality. The modelled shapes of the images of the gods form the units of the pattern on the walls.

Classical Indian painting had shown God in his manifestations in the world enchanted by their presence. They moved on the ever-green slopes of Mount Meru or in the clouds nearby. They had their chariots and palaces, groves and mountain caves as vehicles and abodes. This adorable world, the pleasance of the Gods in which they move at will, is not painted on the walls of the temples and palaces of Kerala. Its phantasmagoria is not displayed; no houses are built in these paintings for the Gods to dwell in, no groves to have their sport in; they have no ground to tread on; no space in which they could be shown gracing it with their movement and presence, for there is nothing besides their presence. The images seem to communicate their fullness to the many shapes which they engender: to crowns, halos and tree tops, ornaments and raiments. Thus encompassed, there is no end to the presence of a God but where it coincides with that of another divinity. The limits of the body are augmented until they touch upon the confines of another presence equally potent in form-engendering shape (the beaded 'outline', on the right of the Gaṇesha-Pārvatī group is the outline of another divinity).

The ornaments, the surroundings, the symbols, are all the outcome of the central group. Their shape is like that of their source; the petals and pearls, stems and scrolls, share in its modelled ripeness.

The closeness of shapes is massed spaceless but voluminous on the surface. It is bounded by a linear context whose flow is staid around the central theme, the compact figure of divinity. God in the world was the theme of classical Indian painting. The world of the Gods is the content of the painted walls of Kerala.

It is shown with a proficiency which an often repeated vision ensures. The paintings of the sixteenth century give no indication when it was first beheld. Wall paintings of Mysore under the Hoysalas should have been of a related kind if one is to judge from their sculptures.

The sculptures of the Hoysala temples of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries represented a disintegration of the plastic sensibility of Indian sculpture. The disintegration was marked by the inert heavy shapes of the images and by a cloying profusion of detail in which these inert shapes were bogged. This level of disintegrated form became, it appears, the basis of the heroic and meticulous world of the gods such as it was painted on the walls of the temples and palaces in Malabar.

The ample, if schematic, modelling of the figures, together with the heavy and hard surrounding lines, would be in-congruous did not these two constituents pervade the whole composition and all the paintings. Two components of classical painting, each following its inherent possibilities logically to the very end, appear thereby compacted; the one fits, the other fills, they have become the substance of painted form.

Outside the general type of Kerala painting, in their posture, costume and physiognomy, are the figures painted in a panel of a wall of the rock-cut temple at Chitaral. Stark profiles of face, the body in a combined front and side view clad in tight bodice and clinging *sari* betray the influence of the late Vijayanagar style.

The Vijayanagar style became part of the large scale paintings of the eighteenth century in the palaces of Krishnapuram and Padmanābhapuram. The walls of a spacious room on the fourth floor of the palace at Padmanābhapuram are covered with nearly fifty large compositions, each in a painted frame of its own. This arrangement might have been suggested by European contacts. There are but the faintest occasional reactions to them in the paintings themselves. This is the more surprising on account of the centuries of Western contact and rule on the Malabar coast. The paintings of the sixteenth century are free from any intrusion of European idioms. Neither do contemporary Indian developments of painting contribute to these compositions except in the prevalence of the "face in profile showing the eye in front view", and the corresponding "stance" of the body, and in a thinning of the modelled context of the paintings so that some of the figures are outlined against the flat ground.

The close contiguity of the superimposed masses of figures had been thinned. It had also become rationalised, cut up and arranged in lines. The single figures now are set at a distance from each other, so that one can see the ground of the painting against which they are limned. Their clear outlines have regained a modelling capacity—almost absent from the 16th-17th century paintings though present in classical Indian painting. They are accompanied by a beaded border such as had comprised the wider entourage of the images in the earlier groups of paintings (Pl. 42 a; b). Here it is no longer an outer rim to their opulent presence; it is a device which clarifies and enlivens the surface of the picture to which the figures appear attached as if by series of pin-heads.

Now the figures do not bend their heads shown in broad three-quarter profiles and full ovals. They carry them in sharp profile, summarized by the bordering pin-heads, against the monochrome ground. Though the physiognomies differ according to the status and caste of the figures, they are yet of one typological family. The pictorial ancestry of the faces may be traced to Vijayanagar. The bodies display much of their frontal width and, on the whole, have accepted the stance of the figures in the Vijayanagar and subsequent schools of South Indian painting. The freedom of movement, however, is greater here than elsewhere, and the joints are more flexible. The line has regained a modelling capacity, has become more pliant, and rejoices in its own inventiveness in curved triangles applied on arms and chest. The conversion of the various pictorial means into ingenious surface pattern can be seen in the 'drop' shapes especially on the necks of the figures, where the sinews are (Pl. 42a; b). Drop shapes and triangular lines are patterns derived from an altogether assimilated descriptive naturalism of Western provenience.

The newly devised elegant figures confront the opulence of the more ancient shapes (Pl. 43). The ancient rhythms have dwindled in sweep and cogency, in comparison with their former plenitude. Different from the polished, if arid elegance of the paintings in the palaces, those on the walls of the temples show a vigorous or residual folk art (Pl. 44). The end of Kerala wall painting came in the later part of the nineteenth century.*

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* Today the art survives in painted shadow play figures.

"Drāviḍa and Kerala in the Art of Travancore" is abridged from the chapters contributed by the author to "The Arts and Crafts of Travancore", The Royal India and Pakistan Society, London and The Government of Travancore, 1948.

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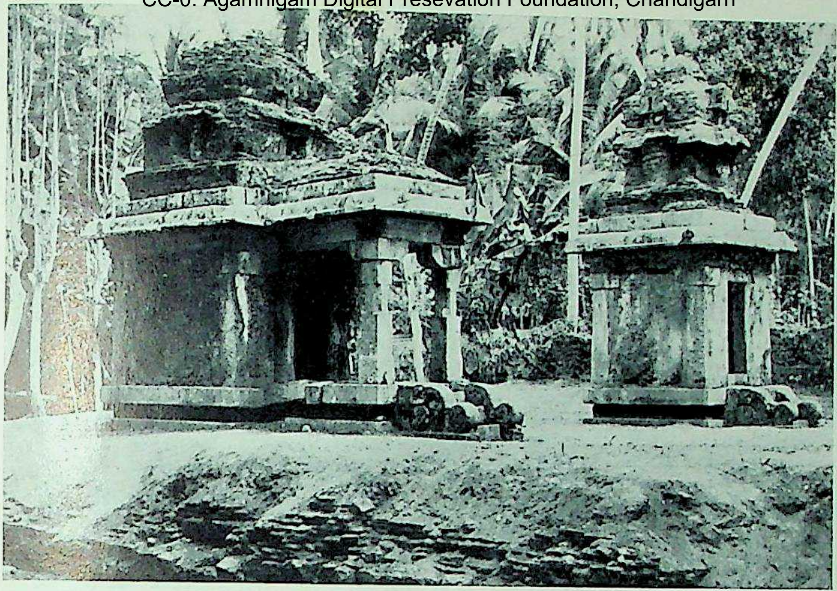

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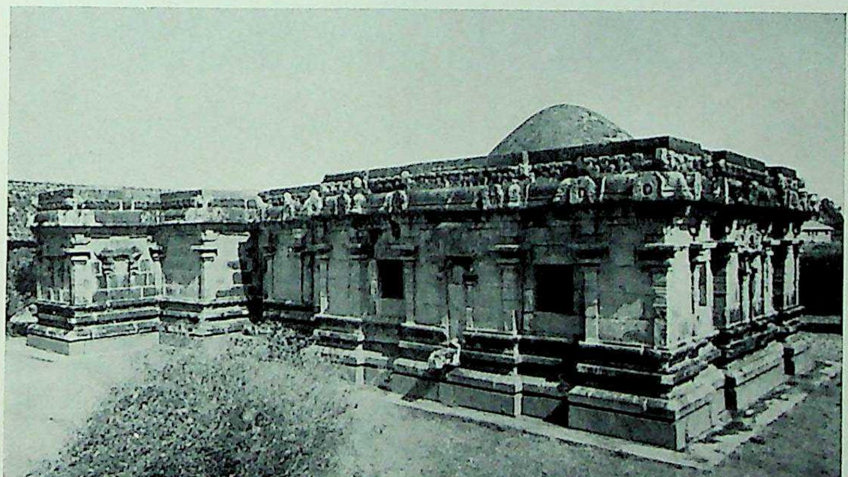

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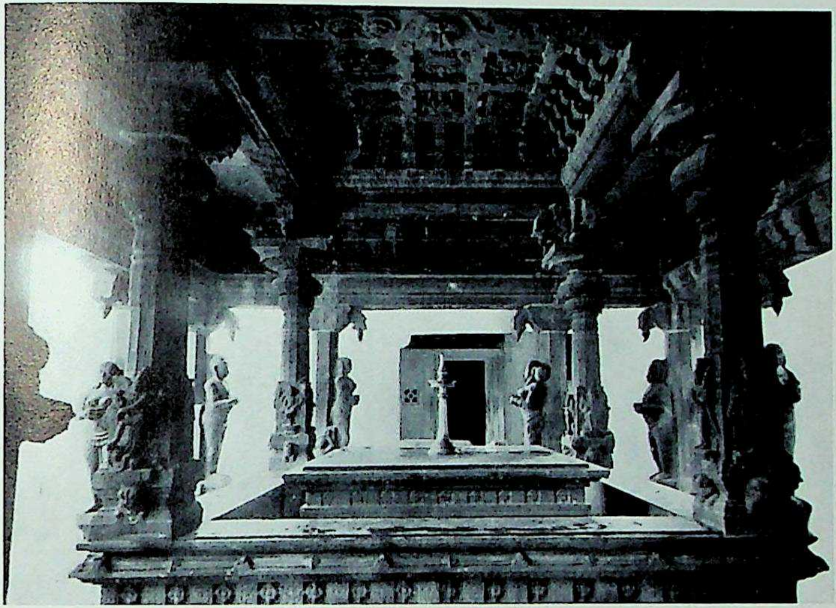

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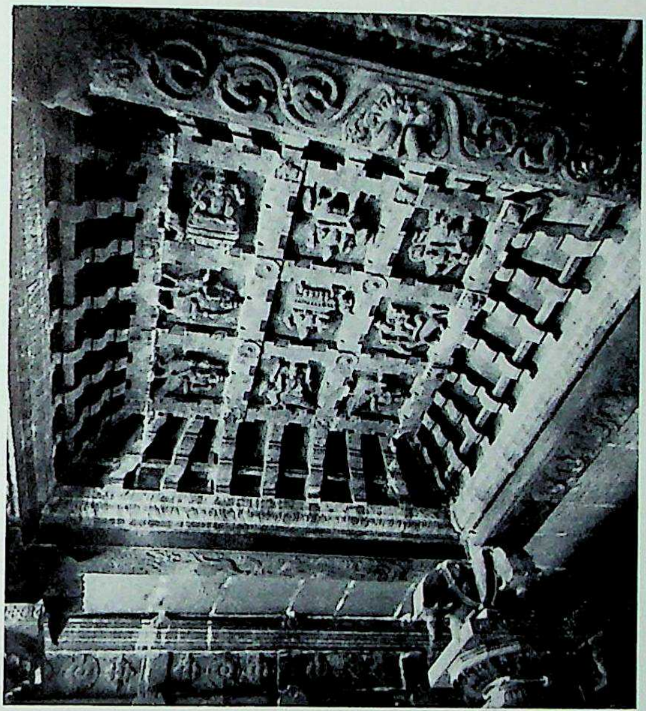

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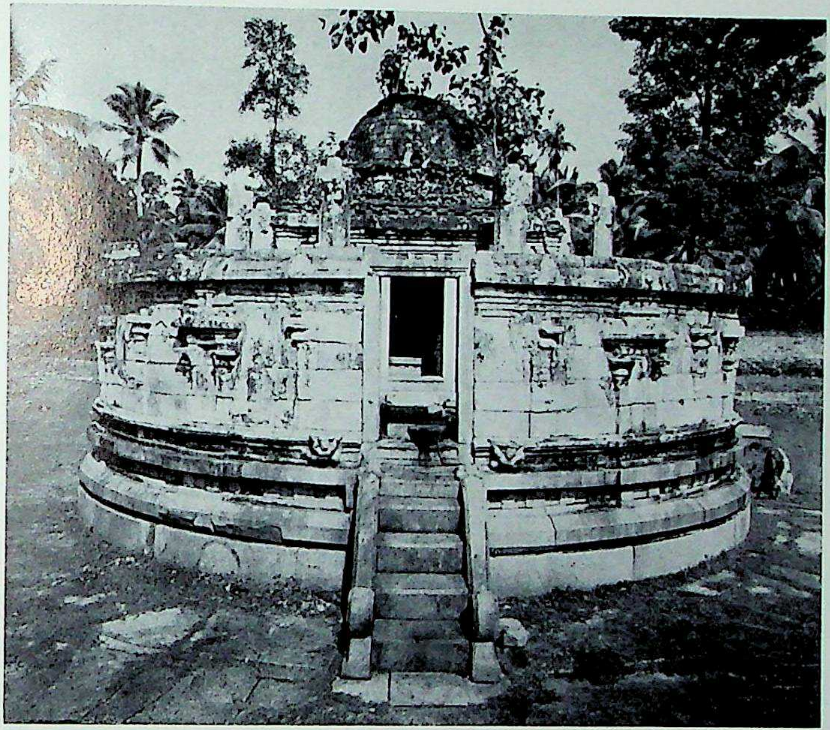

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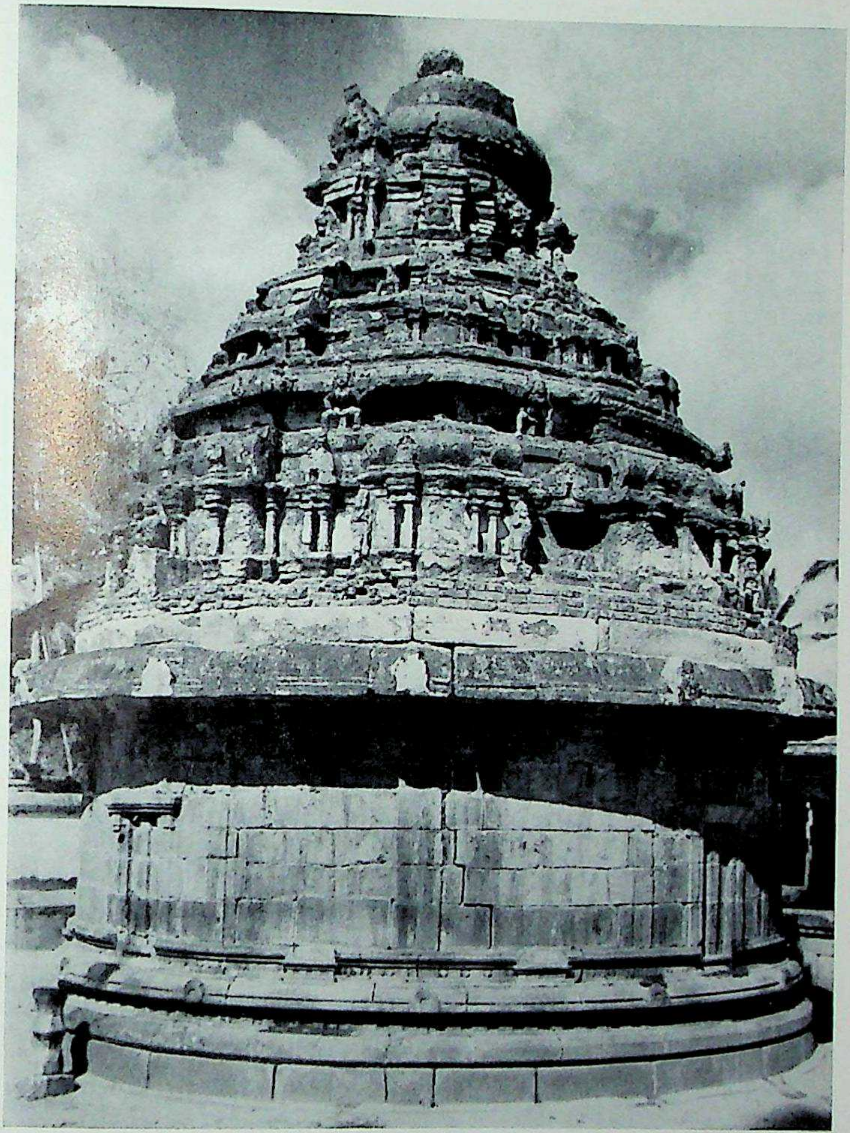

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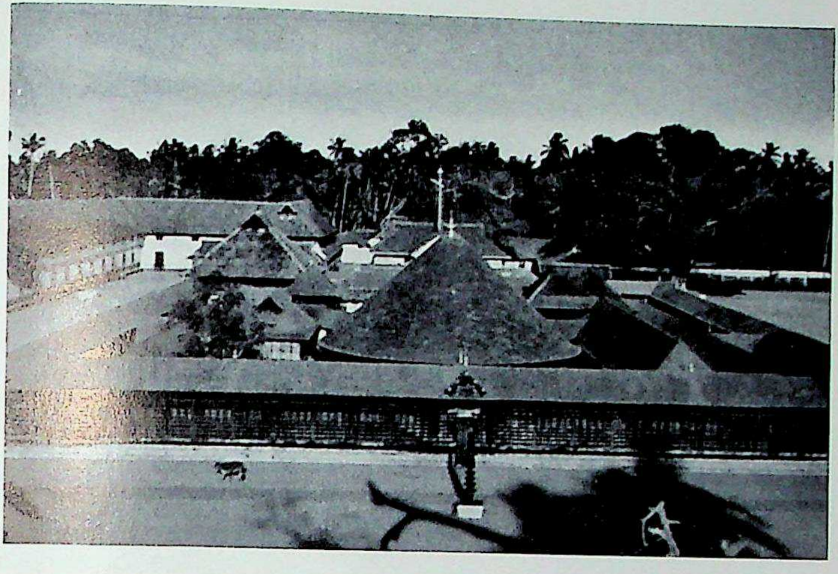

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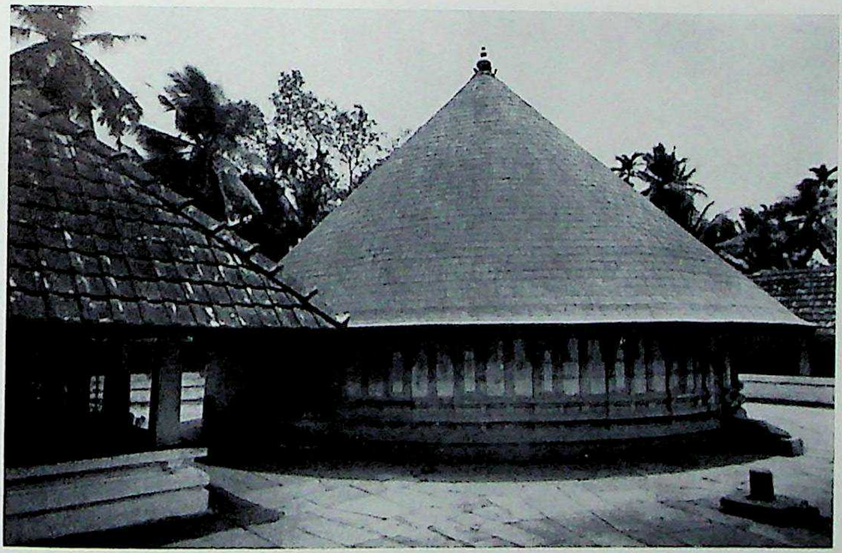

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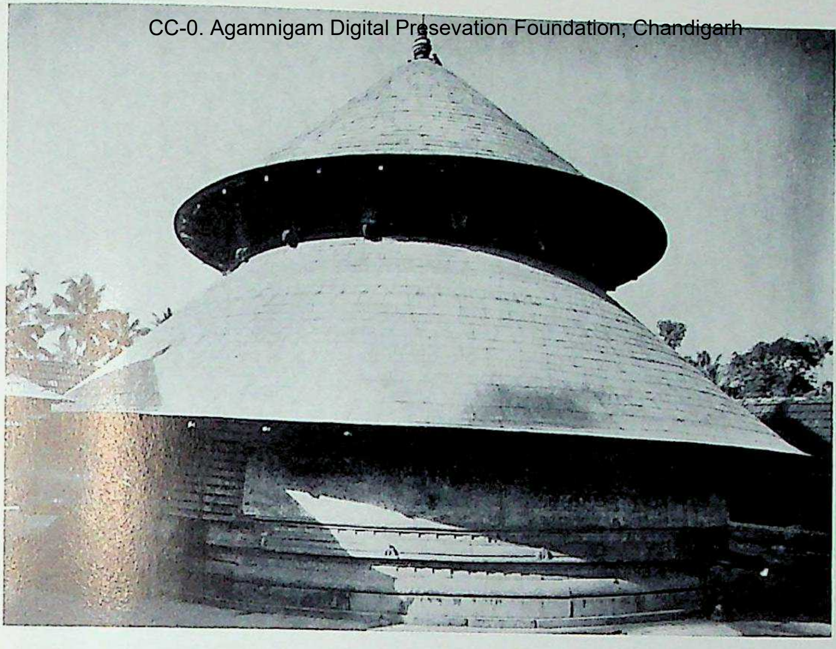

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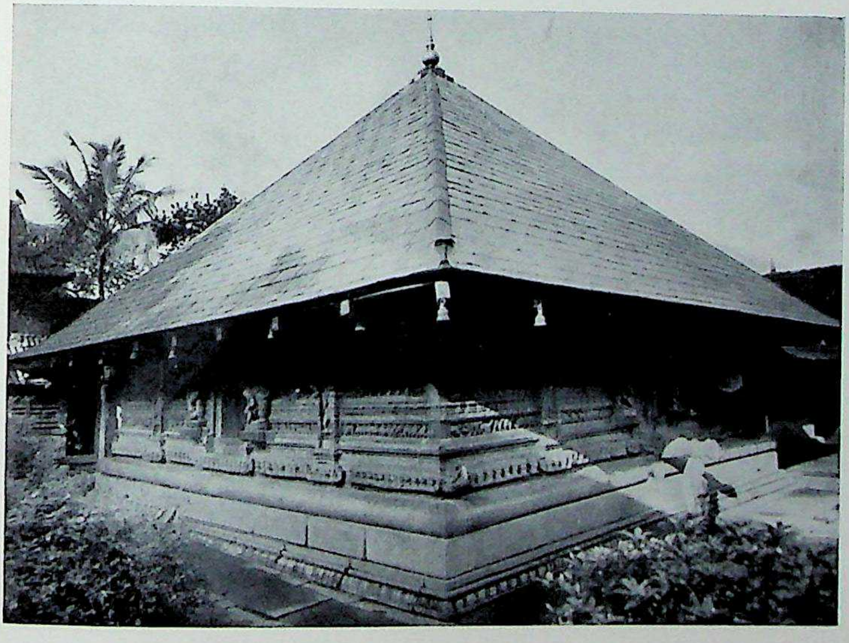

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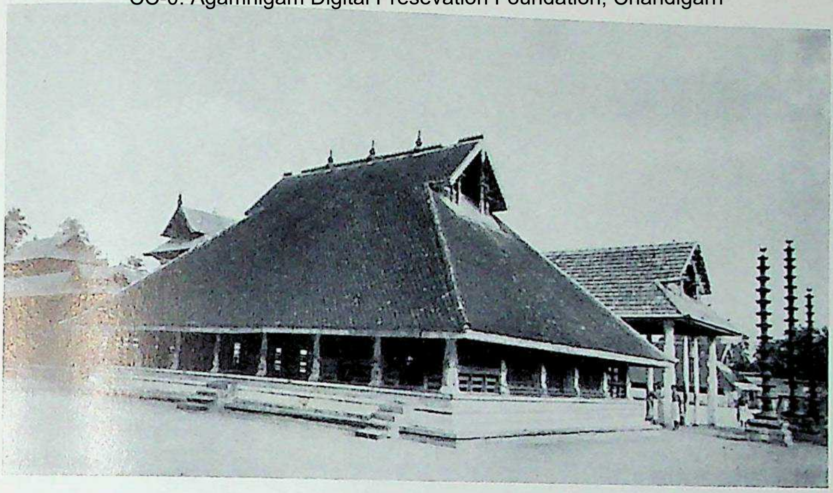

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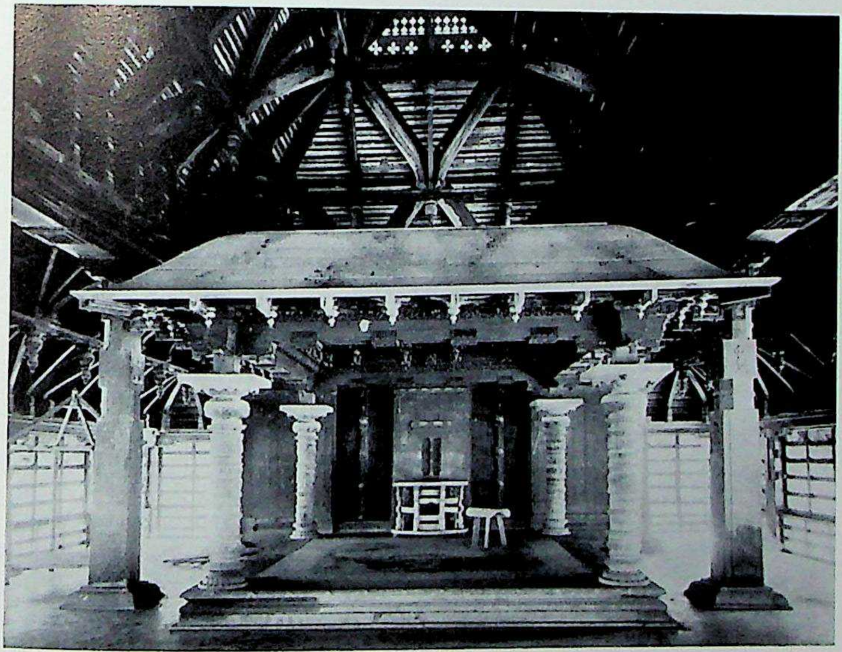

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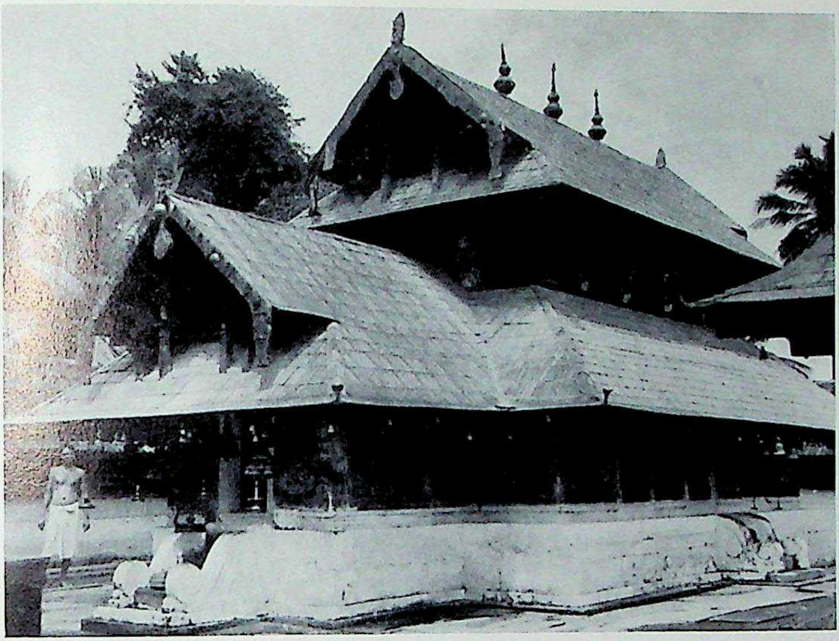

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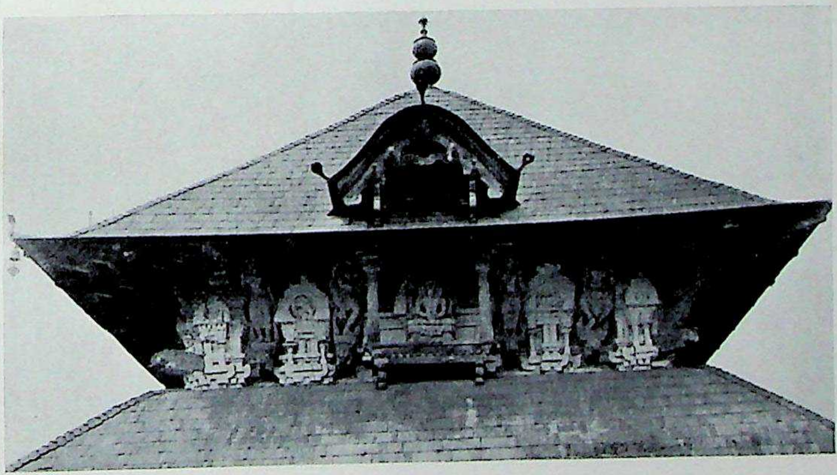

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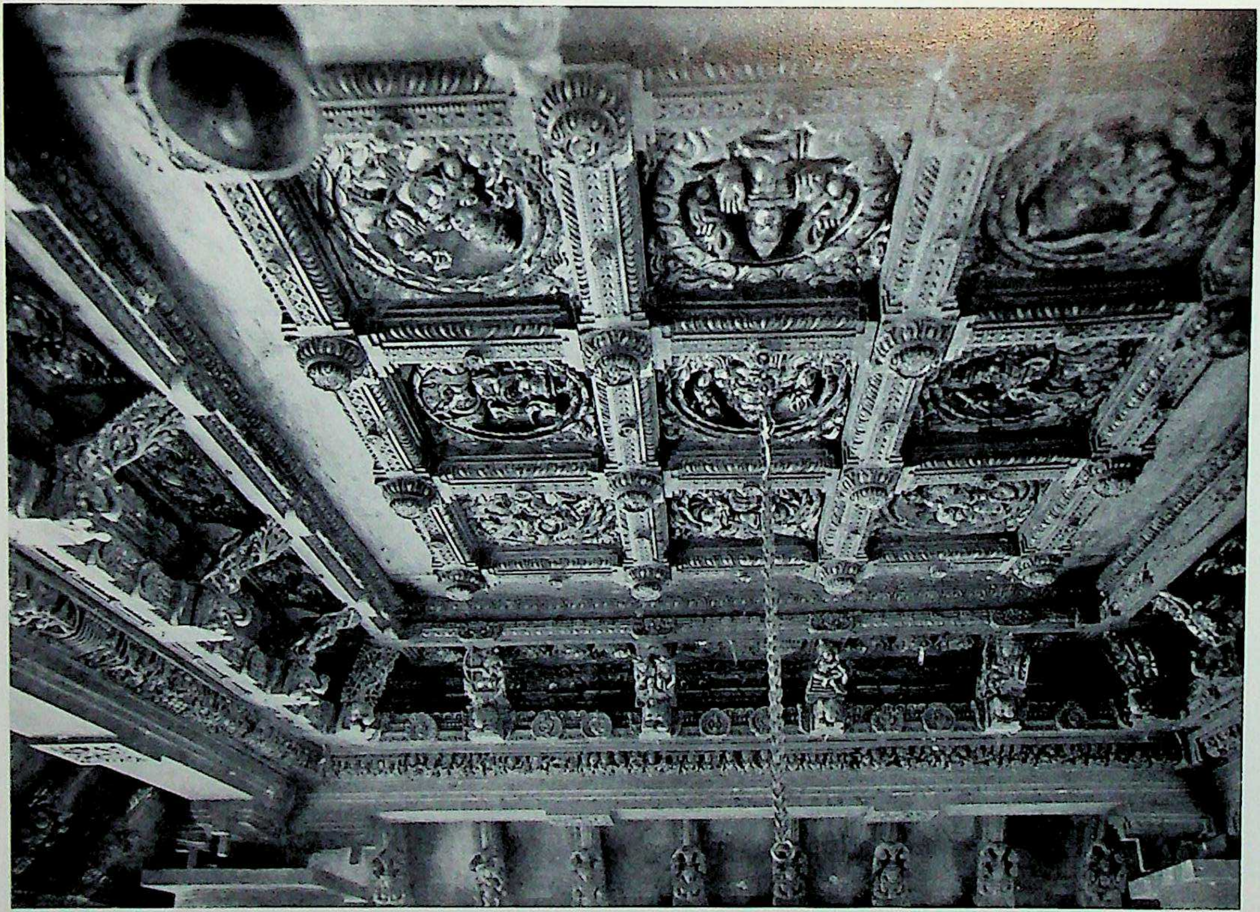

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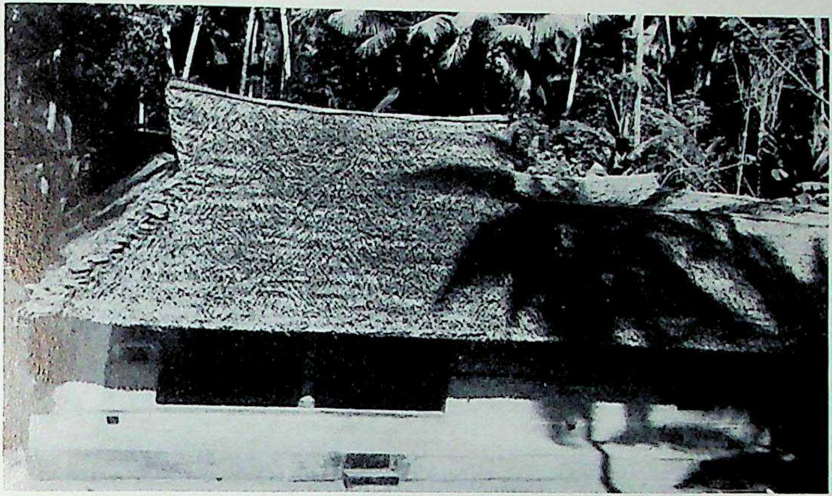

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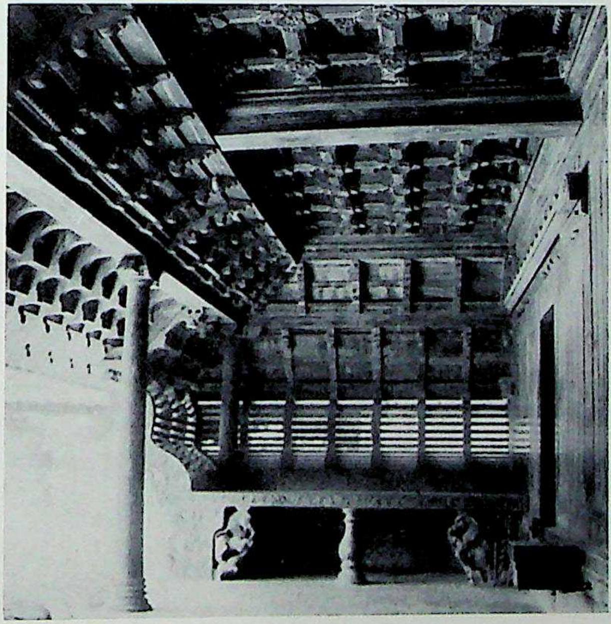

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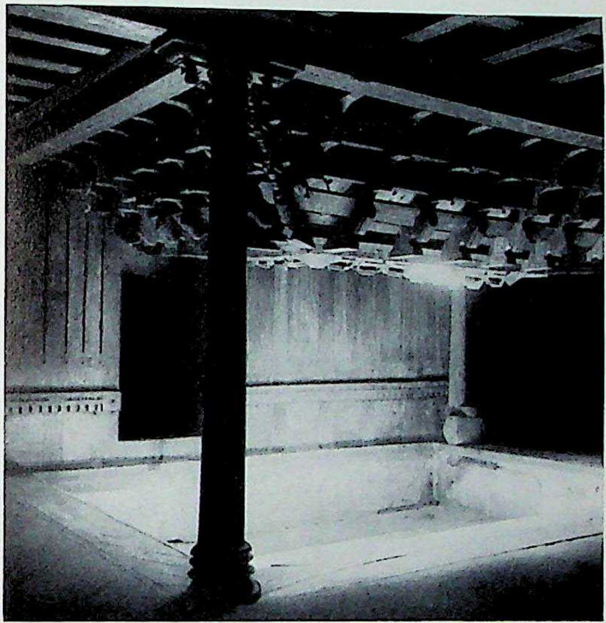

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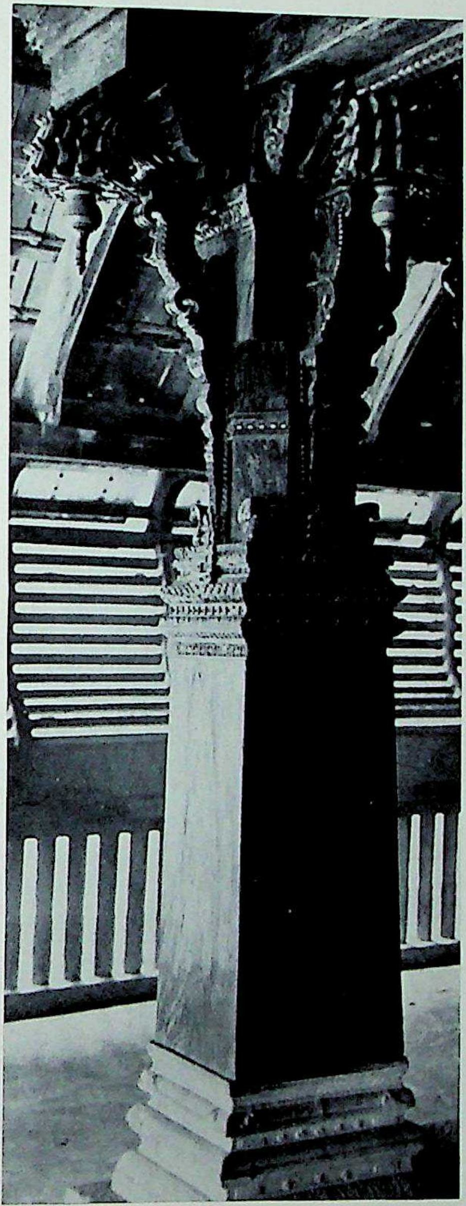

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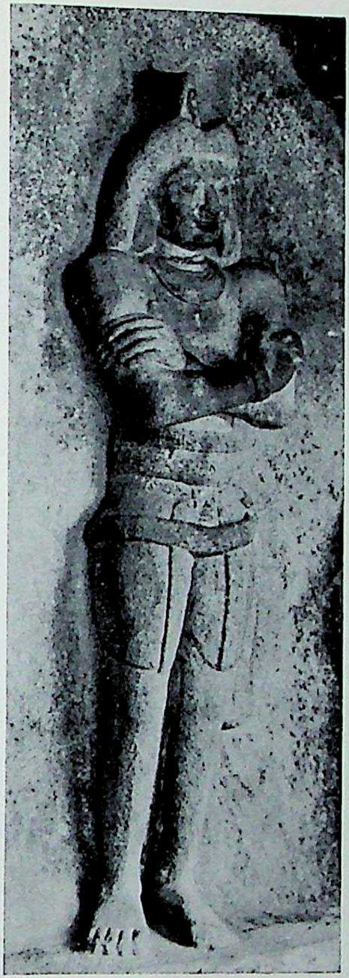

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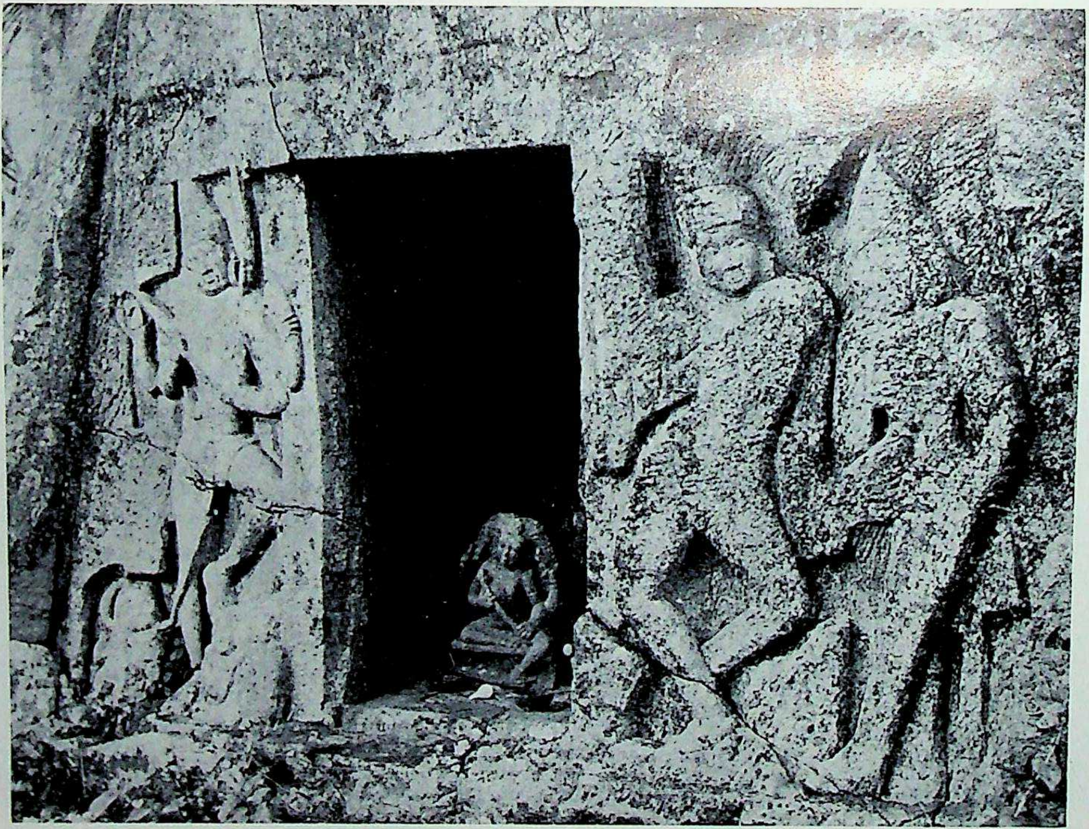

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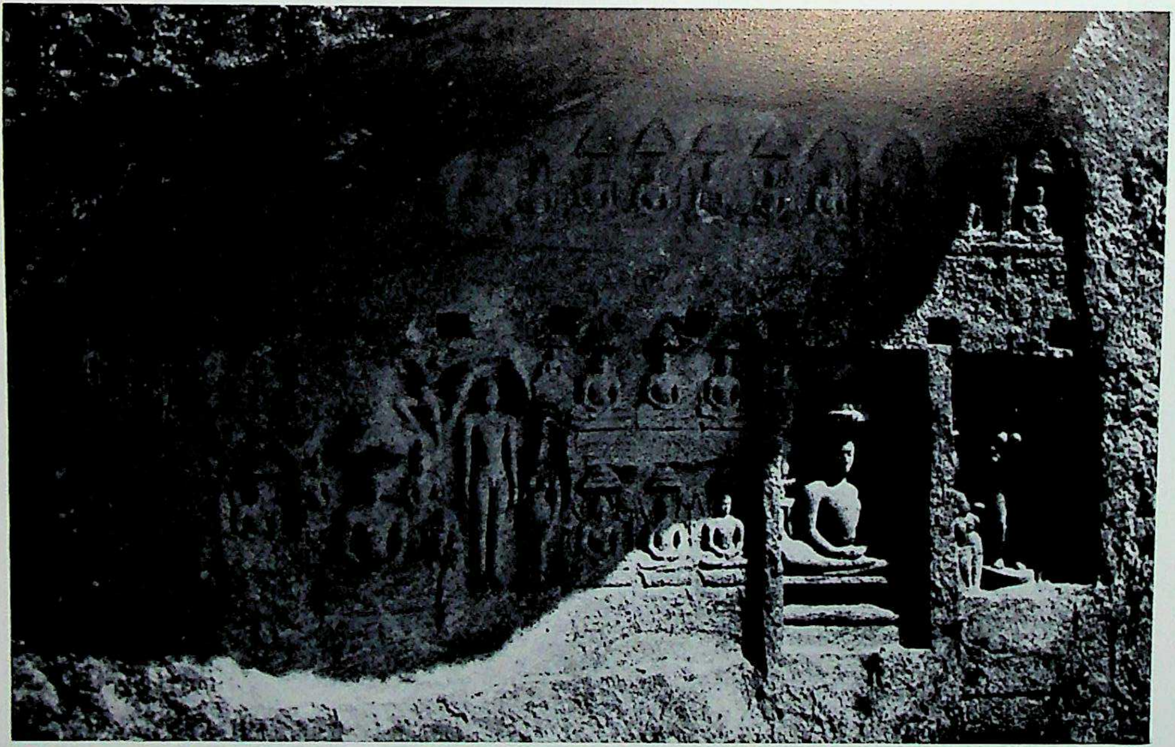

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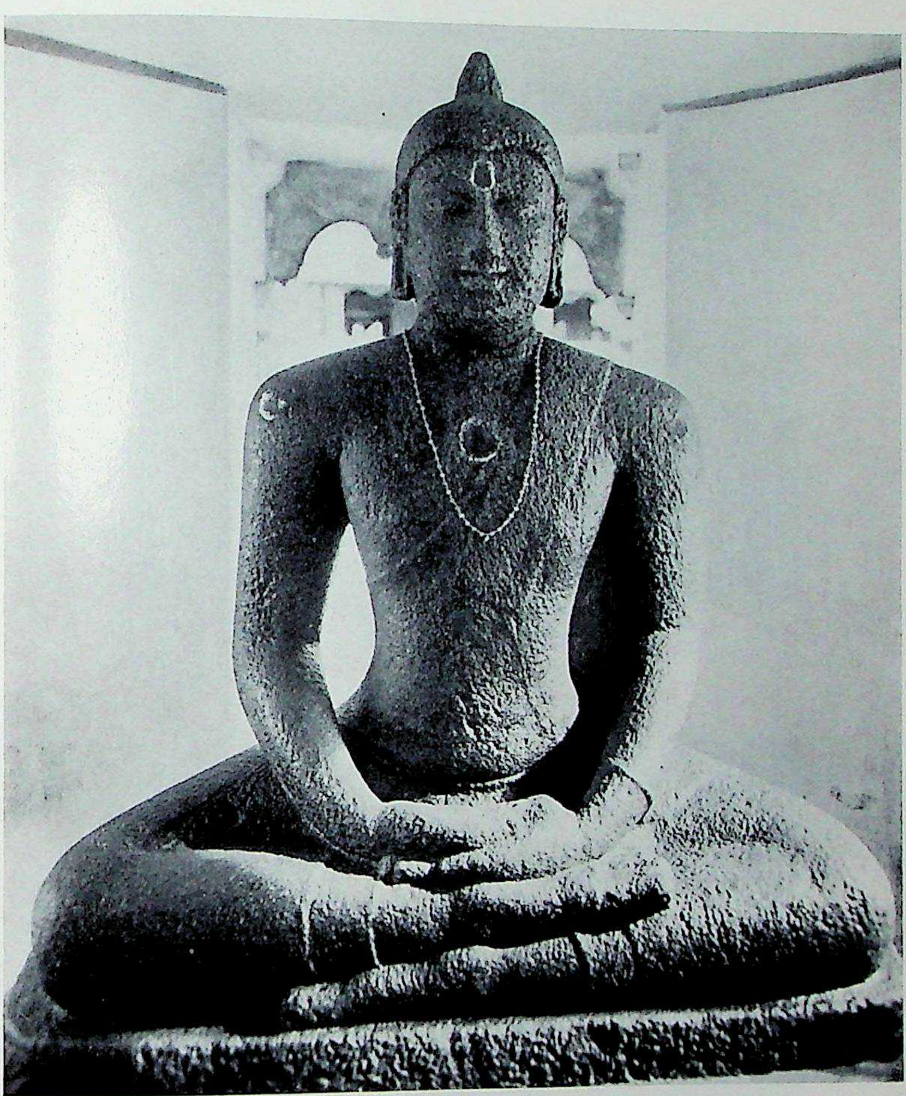

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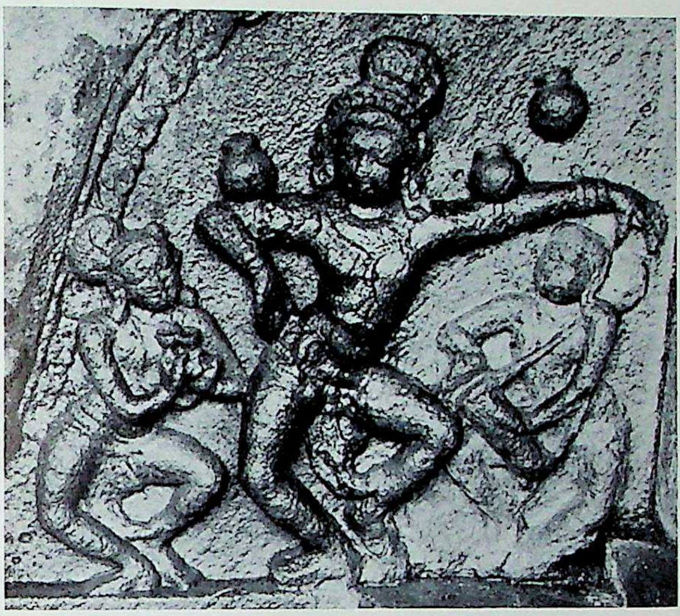

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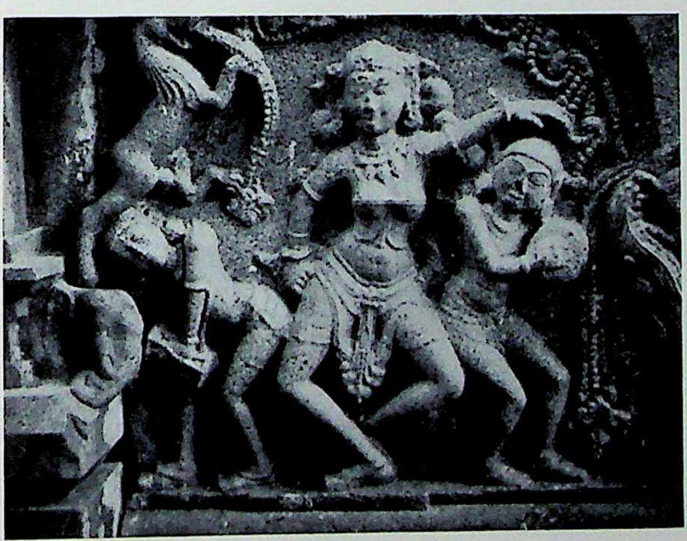

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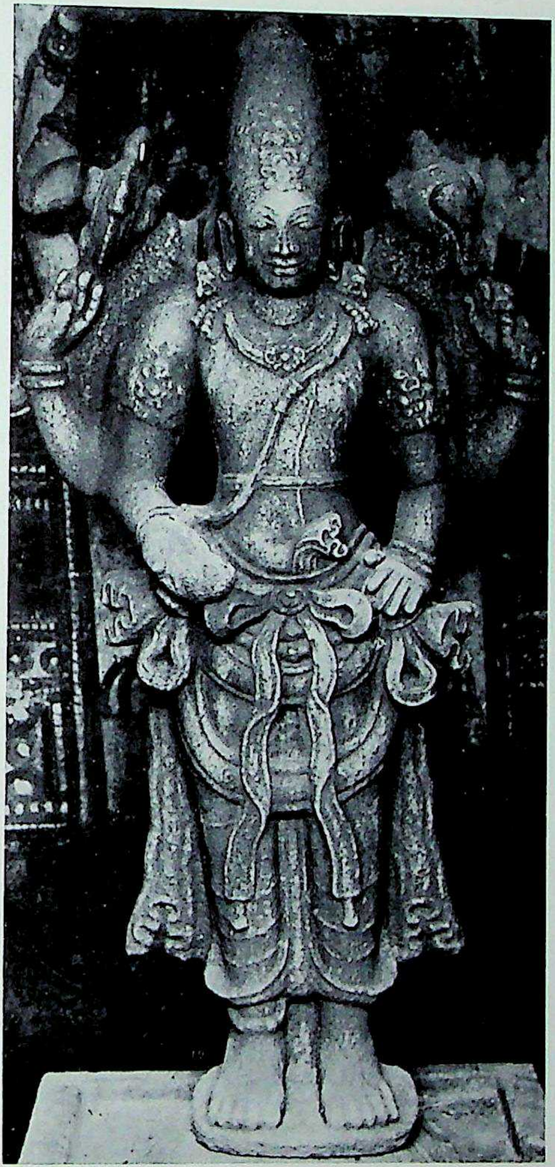

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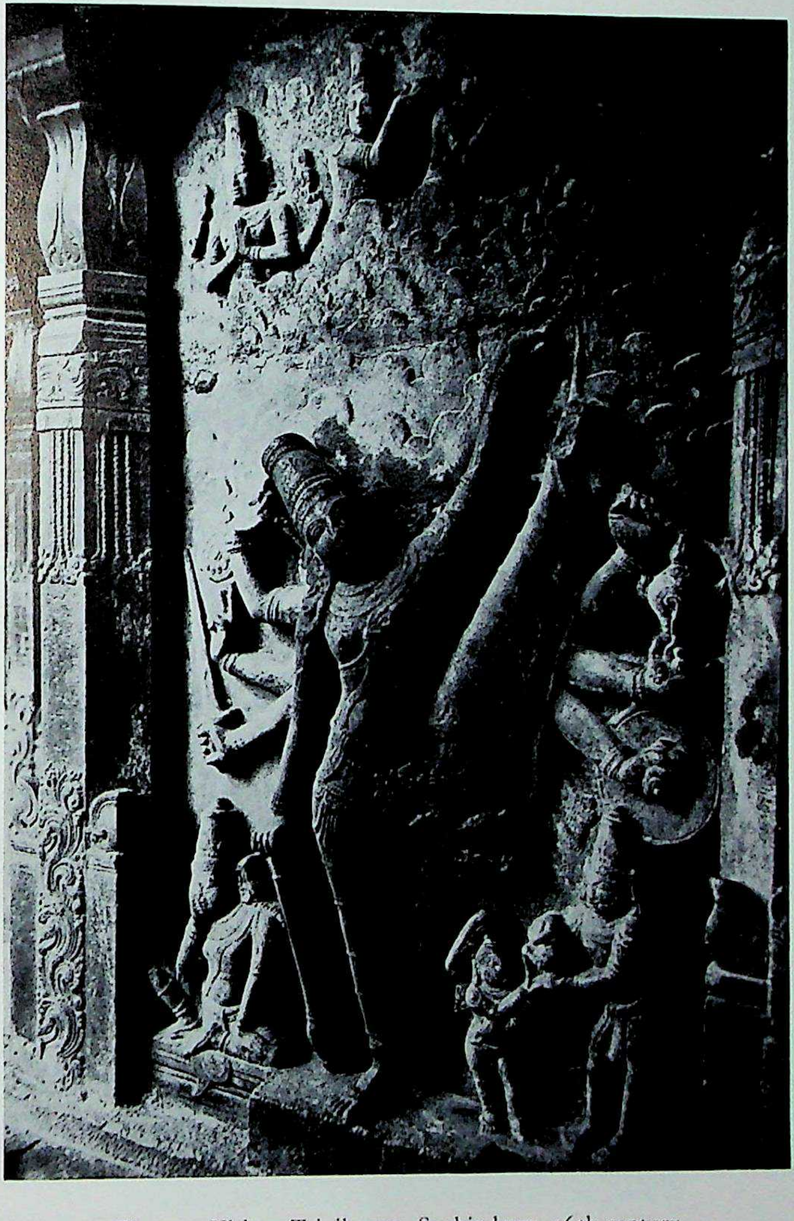

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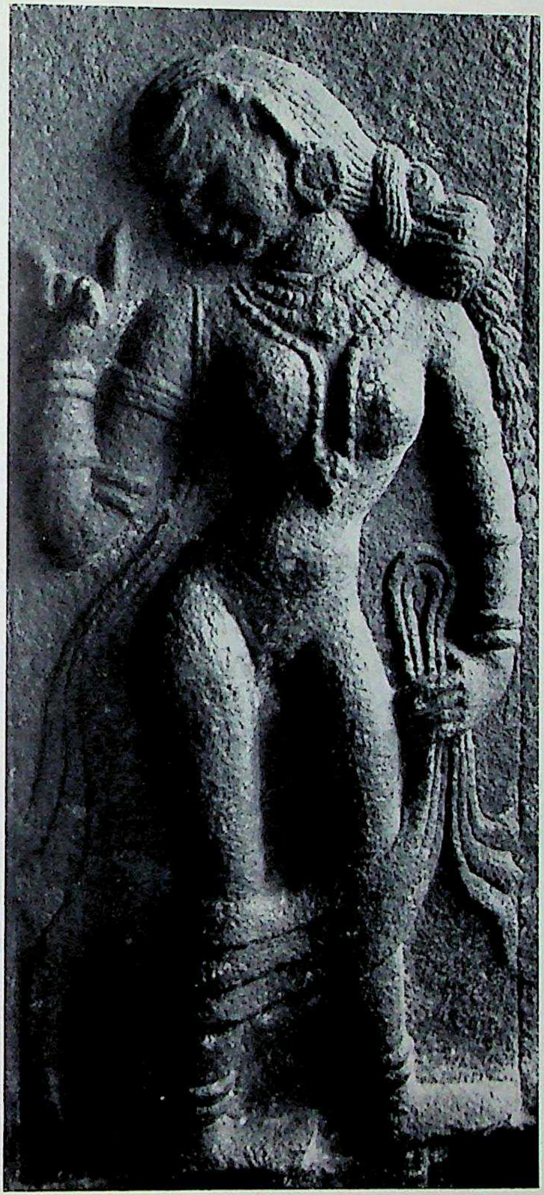

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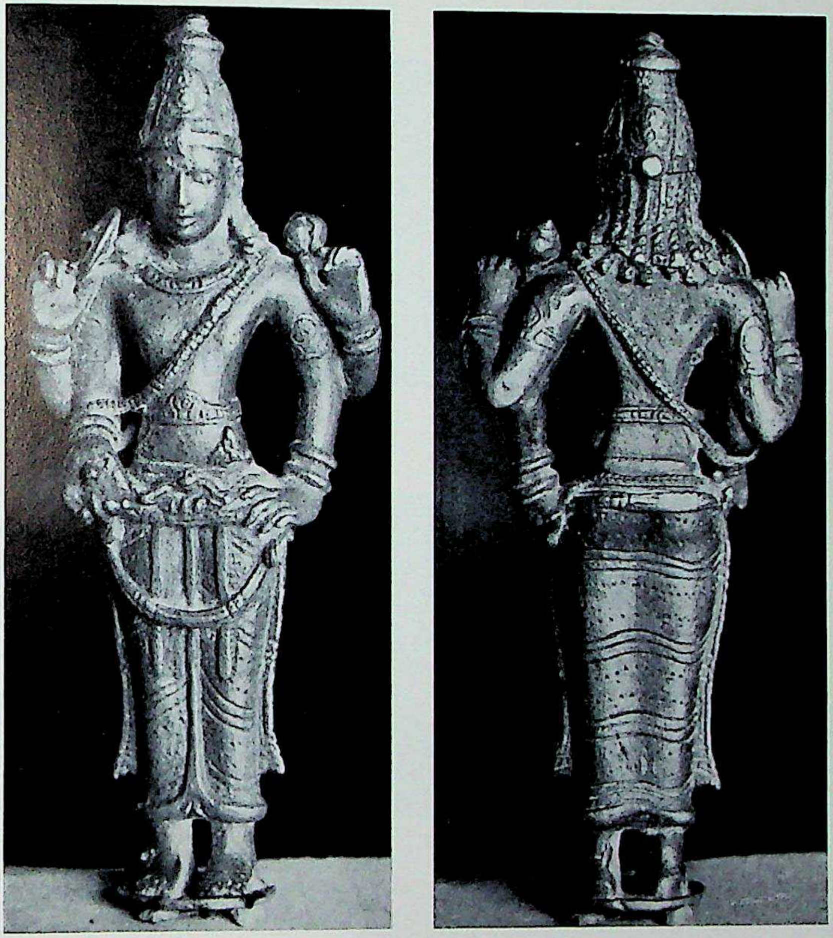

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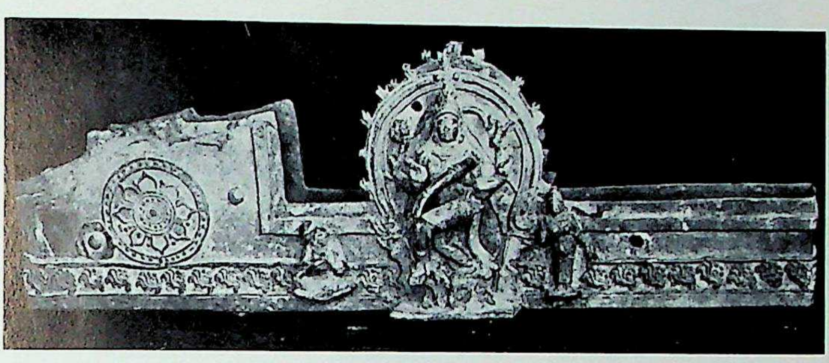

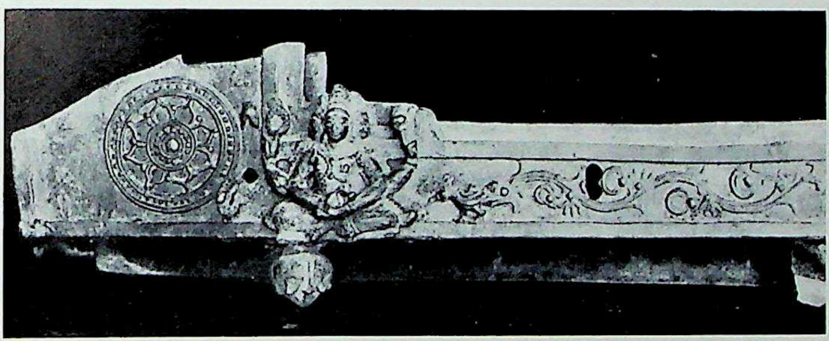

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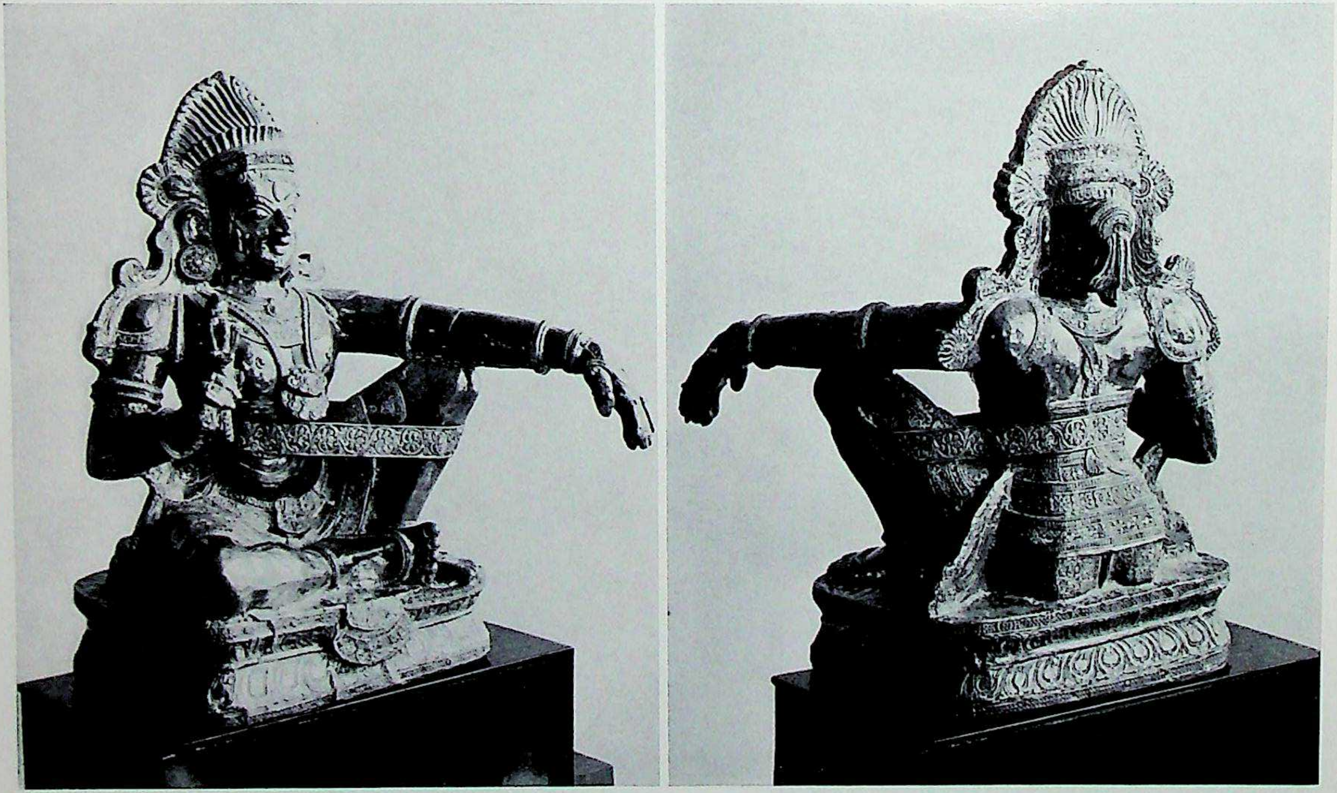

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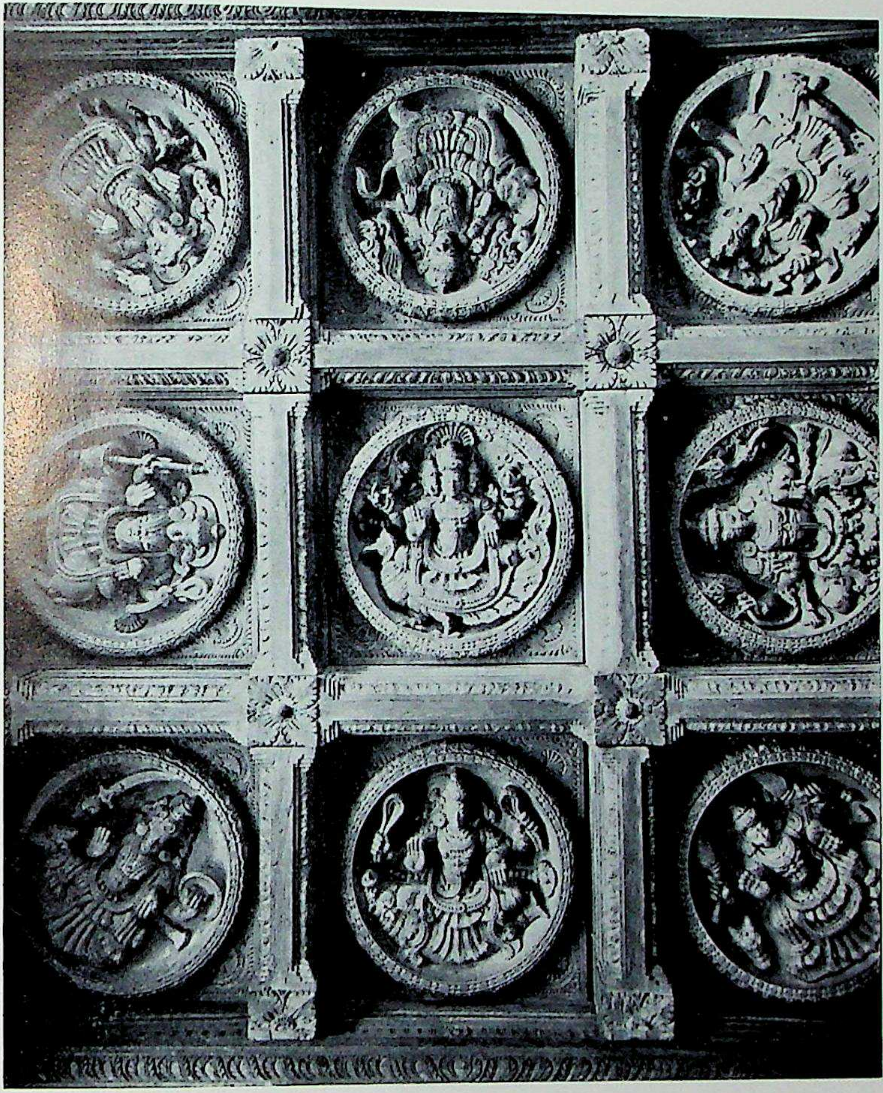

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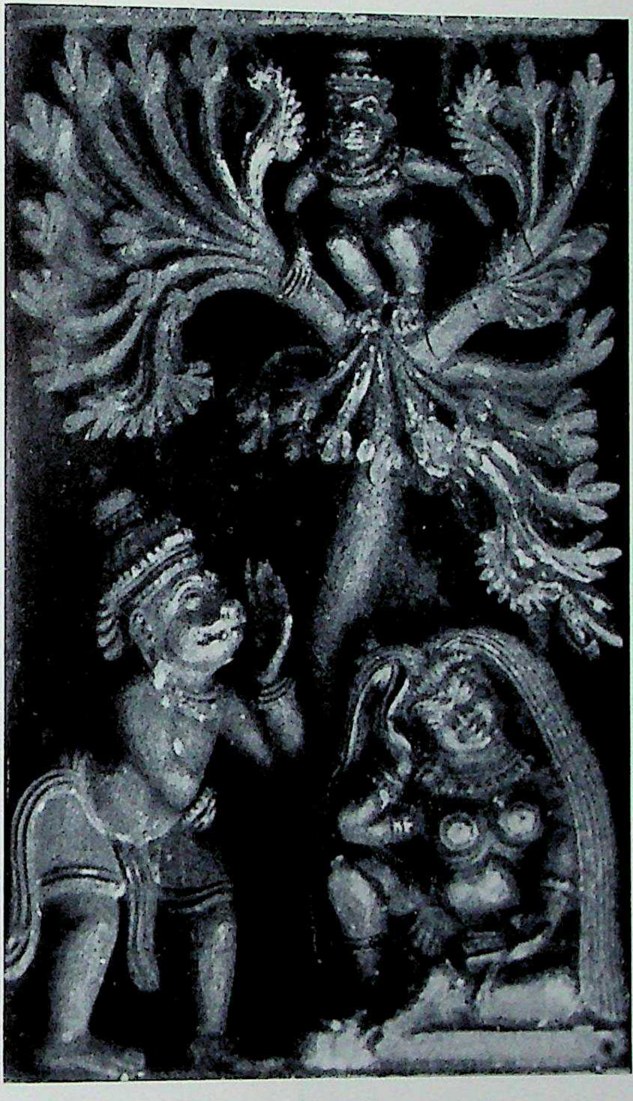

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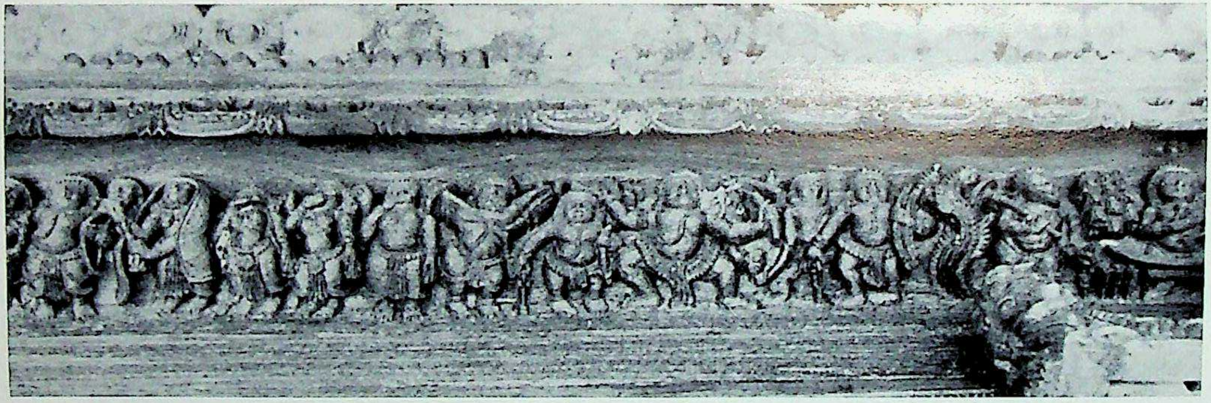

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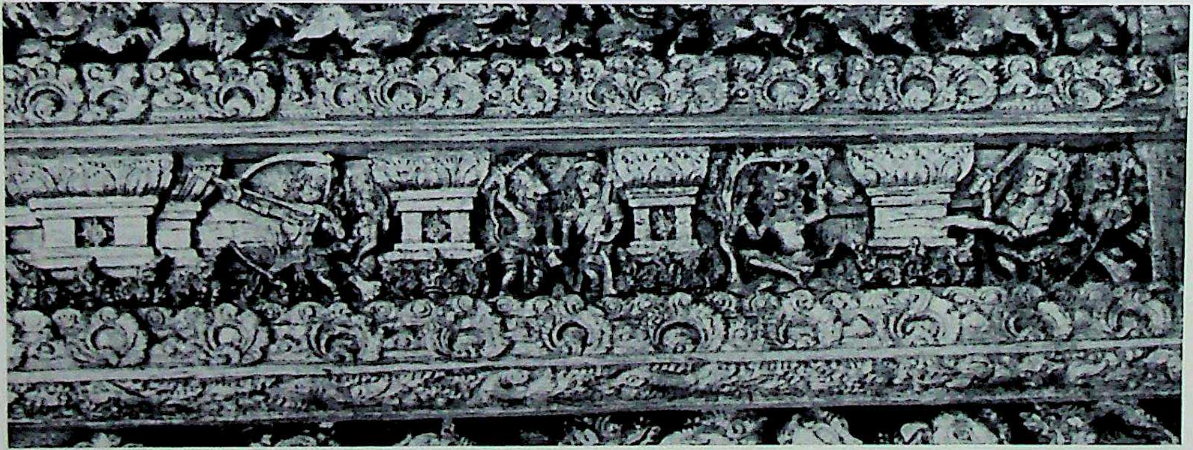

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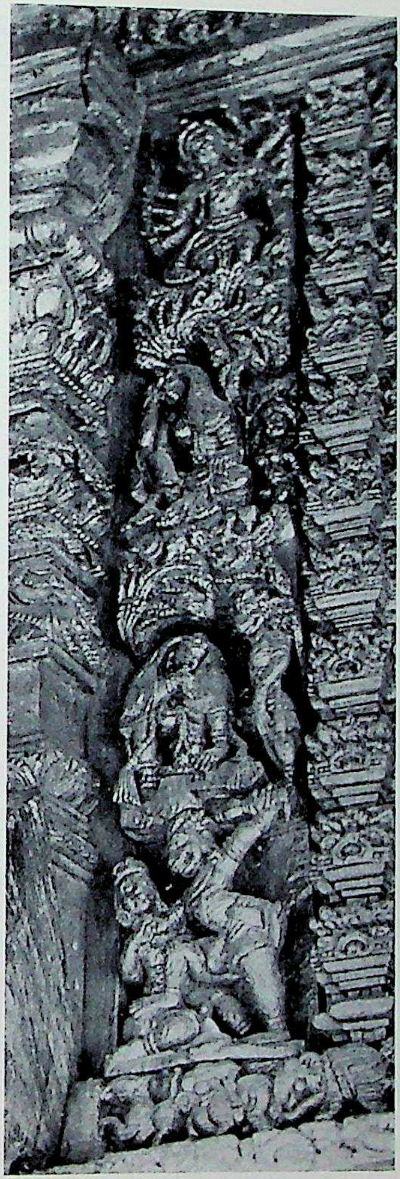

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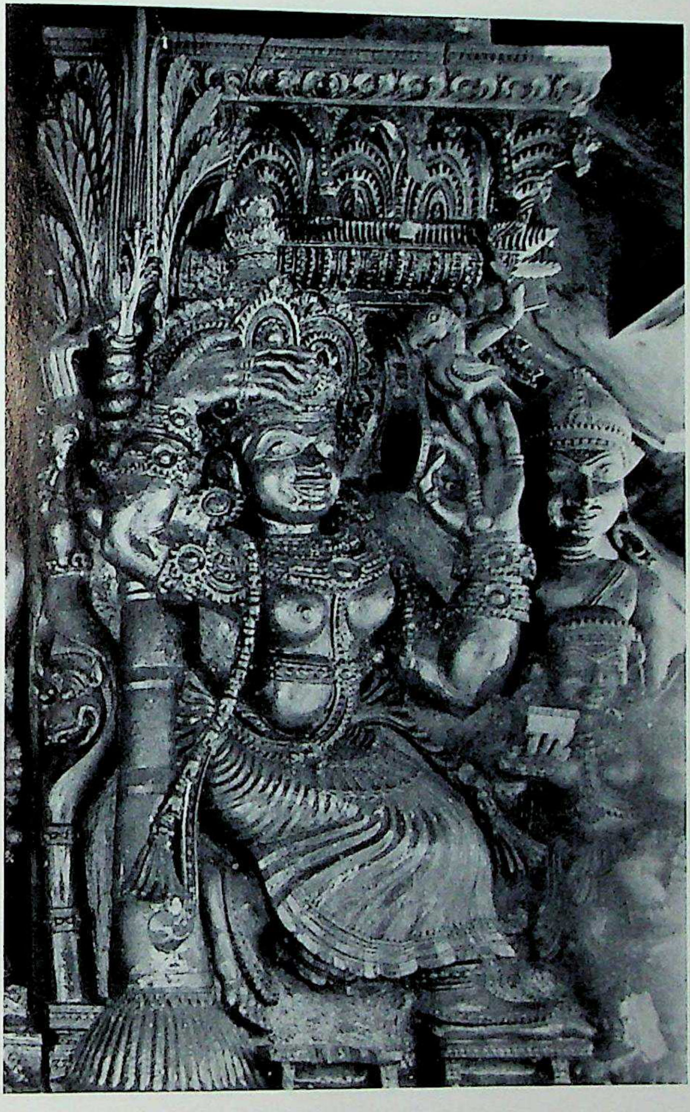

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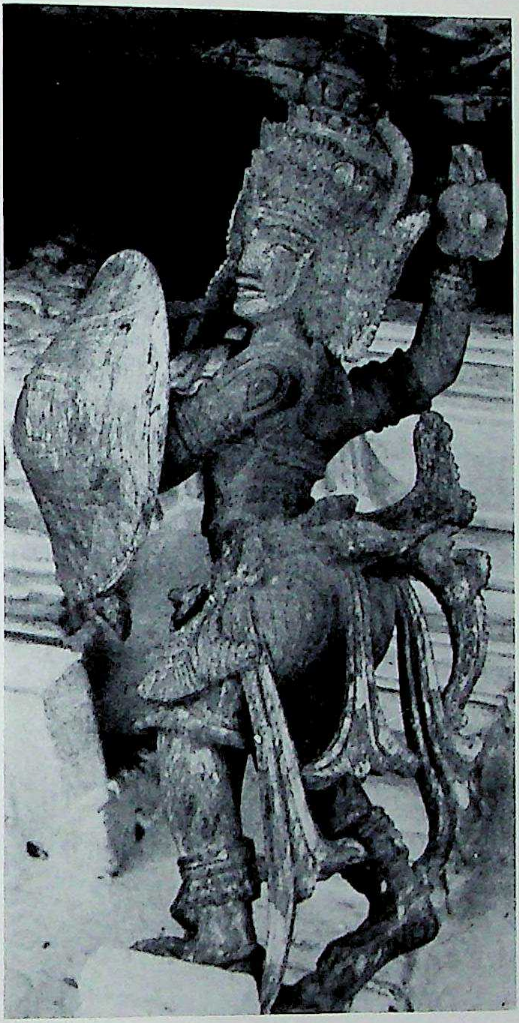

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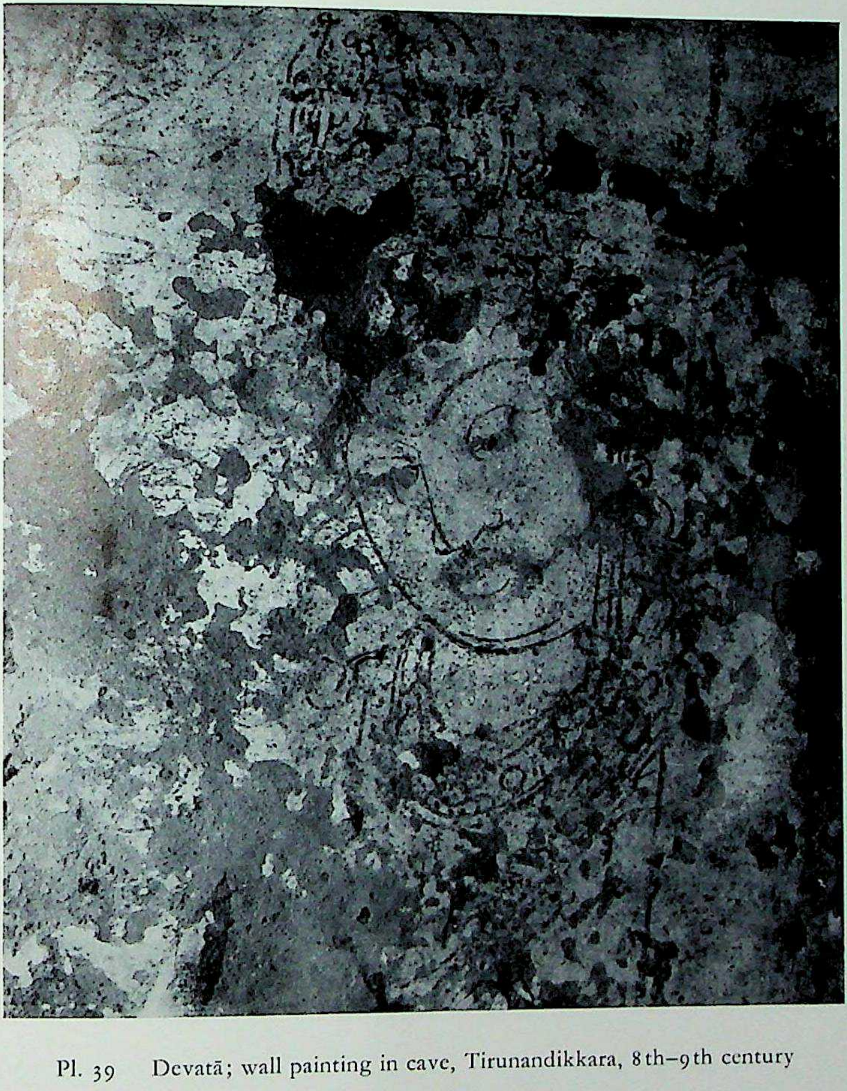

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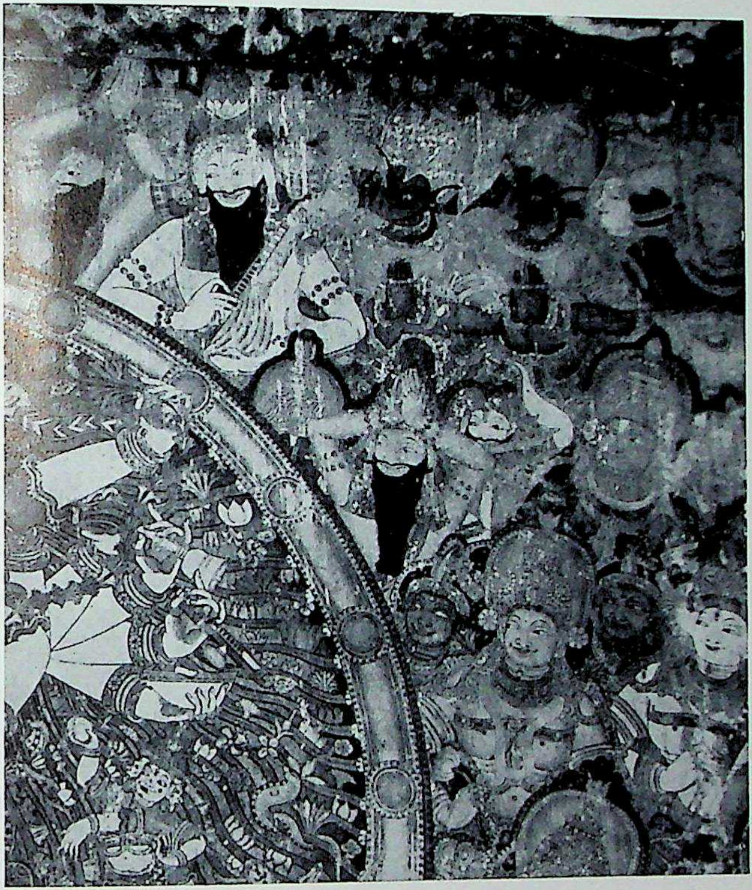

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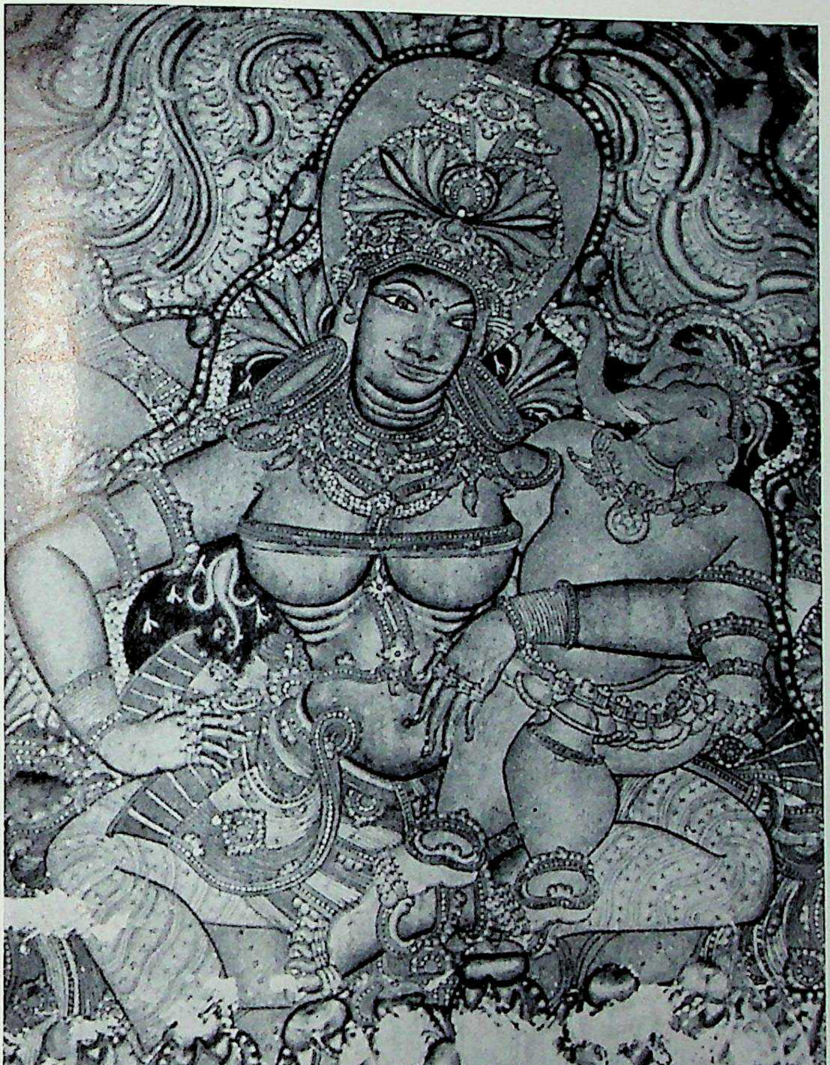

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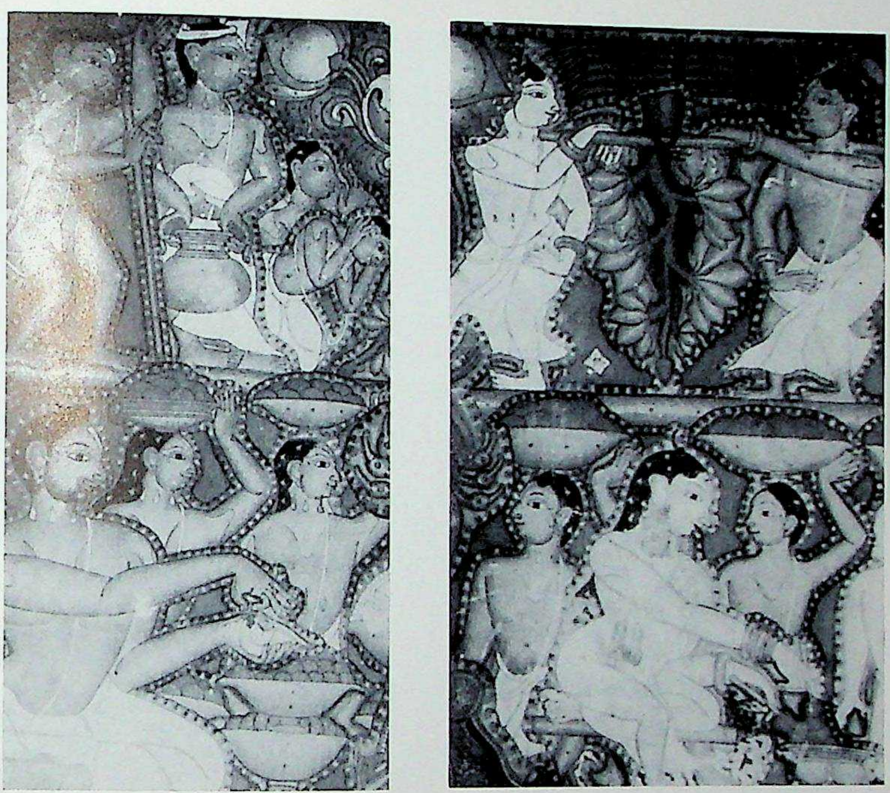

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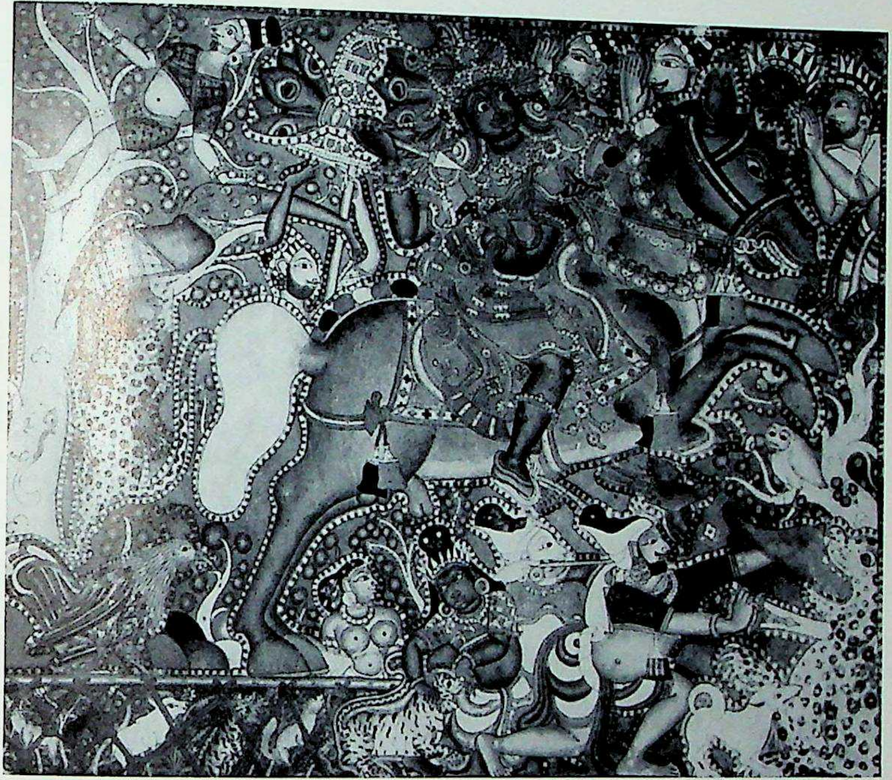

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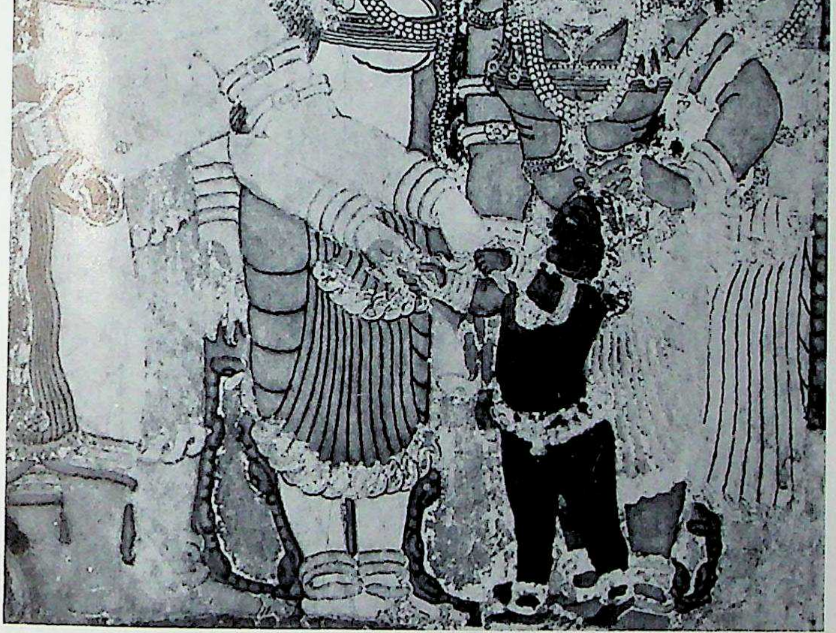

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